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It was Mr. Fuller, the schoolmaster.—Page 32.

HOW CHARLEY HELPED HIS MOTHER.

BY RUTH BUCK.

"HONOR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER."

PHILADELPHIA:
JAMES S. CLAXTON,
SUCCESSOR TO WM. S. & ALFRED MARTIEN,
606 CHESTNUT STREET.
1866.

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HOW CHARLEY HELPED HIS MOTHER.



CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST CLOUD IN CHARLEY'S HOME, AND THE
QUESTION HE ASKED HIMSELF.

IN a small room, one winter's morning, sat five little children and their mother. First and eldest amongst the youngsters was Charley, a boy of nine years old; then Eliza, who was eight; next Maria, just turned six; a step lower came Willie; and last of all was fat-faced Baby Bob, who was crowing upon his mother's knee, and only six months old. "Five little hungry mouths to fill," thought poor Mrs. Shepherd, as she looked at her children, "and only one pair of hands to work for bread to put into those mouths."

The poor mother was very sad that morning, for hers were the hands which

must try to earn food, clothes, and everything else for these little ones. And the hands seemed to be full enough already with that stout baby in them, with the cleaning, the cooking, washing and sewing that must be done to keep the house and the children as neat as they always were.

Some little girls and boys never know what it is to want bread. They have kind fathers and mothers who are both able and willing to buy them good food and nice clothes. They never have any cause to fear that when the morning comes there will be scarcely anything to eat, or that when their frocks and shoes are worn out there will be no more new ones instead of those that are cast aside.

It used to be so with Mrs. Shepherd's children. Their father and mother were not rich; but the father went far away on the sea, and, when he came home, he brought the money he had earned, and put it into his wife's hands to buy what was wanted. Often, too, he brought curious things from foreign lands to delight his

girls and boys. Pretty shells and corals, that had come thousands of miles across the seas, stood on the chimney-piece in the little parlor. And Charley, who went to school, and was rather proud of his learning, could point out on the map the names of the places from which "father" had brought them to please his darlings.

On the little stand beside the parlor window lay the husk of a great cocoa-nut in two halves, and there were some cups made of cocoa-nut shells too, which "father" had shaped nicely when he was at home in the winter time. Each of the children had a cup of this kind, and even little Willie could repeat what his father had said about the way in which he used to pelt stones at the monkeys on the tall trees, in order to make them throw cocoa-nuts back again.

I should think any little boy or girl can guess who ate the nice kernels which once lined those cocoa-nut-shell cups, and how all the children, except Baby Bob, reckoned on seeing "father" home again.

But the children were not reckoning on seeing "father" when they were together on that chill winter's morning, with only a very little bread to put into all those hungry mouths. Three months before that time they were. Every day they used to say, "Maybe father will be here to-day;" and when they heard a step coming up to the door, they would all run together to try which should get the first kiss. But day after day passed by, and father never came, and the little ones began to ask their mother why he was so long away from them, when he had promised to be home.

She always said she could not tell; she hoped he would come soon; but she must have been afraid that he would not; for Charley, who was very steady and thoughtful, saw great tears run down her cheeks and fall on Baby Bob's round rosy face, as he lay sleeping on her lap, knowing nothing, either of hopes or fears.

At last a neighbor came in and showed their mother something in the paper. She gave a great cry when she read it, and

her face turned white. The poor children thought she was going to die; but after a while she was able to speak to them, and tell them the sad tale she had read in the newspaper.

And what do you think it was? Why that the "Eagle"—that was the ship in which their father was a sailor—was lost, and the great waves had swallowed up both the vessel and all that were on board. No wonder the poor mother's face turned white when she thought of her husband drowned, and all her little children without a father to love and care for them.

It was well for her that, in this time of great trouble, she thought of the good God, who has said that He careth for the fatherless and the widow, and not only prayed to Him herself, but taught her little children to pray also.

It was very hard for Mrs. Shepherd's children to think that they must no longer listen for their father's step, or look for his coming, with his hands full of gifts for

them. If he had died at home, and they had seen him carried away to the churchyard, and buried beneath the grass starred over with white daisies, that would have been like a real loss. But they had been so long used to look for his coming home, that though they were told they would see him no more on earth, their young hearts kept hoping still. And many a time they made their mother's tears flow faster by talking of what they would do if he would only come back. Sometimes that "if" of theirs made her think, that perhaps, after all, he might not be drowned; but as the days and weeks passed away, hope passed too, and poor Mrs. Shepherd began to feel that she alone was left to work for the little ones.

How was she to do it? If she went out, day by day, from early morning until evening, what would become of Baby Bob, to say nothing about the others, who were too young to be left? And yet if she sat at home, there would be no chance of filling their little mouths, and how terrible it

would be to hear them ask for bread, and have none to give them.

The first thing in which the children felt the change between having a kind father to work for them and being without, was when their mother said to Charley, as she gave him the money to pay for his week's schooling, "I am afraid, Charley, this must be your last for some time to come."

The boy was very sad when he heard this, though he had been almost dreading that it would be so for a month past. The tears came into his eyes, as he said, "Oh, mother, must I leave off school? I have tried hard to learn, and the master always says I shall make a scholar some day."

The mother's eyes were not dry either, since it was as hard for her as for the boy. It used to be so pleasant to hear his father praise him for the pains he had taken while he was away at sea, and promise that the lad should have a long time at school. There was no help for it though, and when Charley's mother said, "I am as sorry as you are, dear, but what can I do?"

and showed him how little money there was left, and how much there was to be bought with it, Charley swept his hand across the wet cheeks, gave the baby a hearty kiss, and set on thinking to himself, "How can I help mother?"

This was his great thought every day as he trudged to school during that last week, and he was a brave lad for keeping that thought uppermost, when one bears in mind how many others there were to be kept down. For just consider what some of them would be. How the poor little boy must have been cast down at the idea of leaving his schoolfellows, who would be able to go on learning, while he must stop at home to take charge of the four children younger than himself, when mother went out to work and wash for other people, as she talked of doing. If she could only stop at home! But if she did, there would be no bread for any of them, and Charley was scholar enough to reckon how much she could earn in a week if she were out every day. Then he

knew what the rent would take from that, and what the coals would cost. What a little money would be left after they were paid for, to find clothes, food, and every thing else for these five children and mother herself! And, sadder still, he must not hope that the kind father, whose face used to be full of love as he kissed his little ones, would ever come back to put an end to their trouble and bring plenty and joy along with him.

It was to be Charley's last day at school, and that was the morning of it when they sat down to such a poor breakfast. The boy's head was quite filled with the thought, "What can I do to help mother?" He held out his small hands and arms, and wished they were stout and strong, while he could not help grieving to think that he was so weak and little.

Charley told his mother this, and she smiled through her tears as she said, "You can do a great deal, my lad. I must trust you to keep house, and take care of all the others. And when Baby Bob gets very

cross and restless, you must bring him to me to be fed. He is too big for your little arms to lift, by rights, but it cannot be helped. You can be a great comfort to me, Charley, for you are steady and to be trusted; so do your best. The good God helps those who help themselves."

CHAPTER II.

THE WAY IN WHICH CHARLEY BORE A PART OF HIS MOTHER'S BURDEN.—THE FIRST DAY, AND ALL ITS TRIALS.

IT was a trial for Charley to bid good-bye to all the lads at school, and to tell the master that mother could not afford to pay for his learning any longer; but he did it. The master was fond of his good little scholar, so he thought to himself, "I will not mind for the money. I will teach poor Charley Shepherd for nothing, as he has no father now." In the evening

he went to Charley's home to tell Mrs. Shepherd that her son might go to school; but she was out—gone to speak about some work. Charley could not think why his master had come, but when he heard, he felt very glad at first, and thanked the visitor a great many times. But soon the smiles went away from his face, and he said, "Sir, I like school, and I should be so glad to come, only mother can't spare me now. She will have to go out to work every day, and I must take care of all the children."

Poor Charley spoke just as though *he* were a grown-up person, and *they* were very little indeed. As the master glanced at his sober-looking face, he felt very sorry to think that the child would have so much care upon him, and he so very young. He thought he would try to persuade Charley's mother to spare him, and he said, "I will call again, and talk to Mrs. Shepherd about it."

"Oh, if you please, Sir, don't," said Charley.

"Well, my boy," said the teacher, rather cross at this answer, "if you do not wish to go to school, I need not mind about it, so I can let it alone."

What a little anxious face Charley's was when he heard these words. "Oh, Sir," he cried out, "I do want to go to school. I love it very much, and I wish I could. You are so kind, that it *is hard* to know I really can't—" A great sob stopped the poor little lad in the midst of his speech. But he fought manfully against the tears, though they rather got the better of him for a time; and then said, "You see, Sir, I *must* help mother. I can't go to work and earn money for her; I wish I could. But I can stop at home and mind the children, and she has only me to look to, now poor father is gone."

The tears quite beat poor Charley now, and the sobs came thicker and faster, in spite of the little—not very clean—hand that tried to wipe the moisture from his face, and the efforts he made to stifle the

sobs, which seemed as if they would choke him outright, now they had found vent.

The master patted his head kindly, and tried to cheer him a little. "But why," he asked, when the lad gave over crying, "why may I not ask your mother if she can spare you? Perhaps she would try to manage without you after all."

"I know she can't, Sir," replied Charley; and he told the master just what his mother would have to do, and how *he* must do his best at home while she was working for them all.

"Still, there would be no harm in her knowing, Charley."

"Only she would be so sorry that she cannot spare me, Sir," said Charley, "and it is no use to grieve her any more."

"You are a good lad, Charley, and a brave lad, though you do cry about it. There is some true courage in bearing the trouble this costs you, by yourself, that your mother' may not have the pain of knowing that the way of learning is open to you, free of cost, but that she is forced

to keep you from it. Dry your tears, my lad, and do not be cast down," added the schoolmaster; "God will not forget the promise he has made to those children who honor their parents. If I can help your mother in any way, or you either, I shall not forget, and here is a little present for you, which you may do as you like with."

As the master shook hands with Charley, he popped a bright half-crown into his small palm, and, without waiting for thanks, went out, and closed the door behind him. The poor boy could hardly believe his eyes when he saw the money. To have a sixpence was a great thing, but half-a-crown! Oh, how rich he felt himself, and, better still, how glad it would make his mother!

It was half an hour before Mrs. Shepherd came home, and it seemed like a day to Charley. He opened and shut the door twenty times to see if she were coming; and when she really came in sight, he could not help running to meet her, and show his treasure. "See, mother, see what

I have got. It is mine, and I will give it to you," he cried.

"Why, Charley, where could you have got half-a-crown? You must have picked it up, and we ought to try to find out whose it is, for picking a thing up does not make it our own."

"I did not pick it up at all, mother. Mr. Fuller, the schoolmaster, called at our house, and when I told him I must stay at home to help you, he gave me this half-crown to do as I like with, and said if he could serve you he would. And now, mother, take the money," said Charley, popping it into her hand, and bending her fingers over it; "I like better to give it to you than to do anything else with it."

"How very kind it was of the master, Charley, and how useful the half-crown will be to us, is more than I can tell. But I do think, Charley, that this half-crown is worth more than any sovereign I ever had in my life."

"Because you wanted it more, mother, is that the reason?"

“Not that altogether, my boy ; there is something else that makes it precious. Can you guess what it is?”

No, Charley could not guess, though he tried hard ; so his mother told him that it was plain he had been a good boy at school, or else the master would not have taken the trouble to come to see him and give him a present. “And the half-crown seems to tell me all this, Charley,” she said ; “and to have a good little son is worth more than a great many half-crowns, or sovereigns either, for that matter.”

Charley’s eyes sparkled at his mother’s kind words, and he felt more than ever resolved to do his very best for her.

But if Mrs. Shepherd could have known how her kind lad had begged the master not to repeat the offer of teaching him for nothing to his mother, for fear she should grieve at having to refuse him, she would have felt her son more precious still. Charley was glad he had done it, and kept the trial to himself, though he was very sorry to leave off school. Still there was a

shade of comfort for him even there. Mother would be at home on Sundays, and he should still be able to go to the Sunday-school and to church. And what a good thing he knew how to read well, and could join letters in writing, and do as far as Short Division in sums. He made up his mind he would not lose what he already knew, if he could help it; and that very night he added up a lot of figures, as he lay in bed, by way of practice. But sleep, which is not easy to drive away from young eyelids, came before he wanted it, and very abruptly finished the sum by rubbing it out of his mind altogether.

Charley had to rise early the next morning, for it was to be his mother's first day out, and, as it was winter time, she had to leave home before it was light; so she called her eldest son, and told him to be very careful not to wake his sister or little Willie. While Charley dressed himself, his mother made the fire, and swept up the hearth, and, last of all, she washed Baby Bob, fed him, and made more food ready

against the time when he would be hungry. Then she prepared breakfast for the other children, and contrived for all their little wants of the day, as well as she could, though there was but a scanty provision when she had done her best to make things comfortable. Charley's half-crown had been put away to help towards the rent, which would soon be to pay again, as it was due every fortnight.

When all was quite ready, and Charley had listened again and again to cautions about fire, and, above everything else, about the dear baby's safety, the mother turned to go.

But when her very hand was upon the latch, she came back to repeat her warnings, with tears in her eyes and an anxious look on her face. "O, Charley," she said, "my heart misgives me at the thought of leaving such a little fellow as you, and all these other poor things under you. It is hard work, and if aught should go wrong, or you should get on fire, or lame baby or yourselves, I think it would break my

heart. I should feel as if I had been to blame for going out. But what am I to do? I must trust you to God, and hope and pray that He will take care of you, and keep you from harm."

What could poor Charley say, but repeat, over and over, that he would try to be a good nurse and housekeeper? and so the sight of the child's quiet, earnest face, did the mother good, and she hastened away to her first day's labor with a heart full of prayers for the safety of her children. No king who has newly come into possession of a kingdom, and feels for the first time all the cares which go with power, ever knew more anxiety than Charley did when left alone. He could nurse very well, for he had often taken hold of baby when his mother was busy, but then she had always been at hand to relieve his arms of the burden when Bob began to kick and cry for her. Baby would be sure to cry some time during the day, and then his troubles would begin. But Charley was not the lad to meet them half-way;

so he laughed and played with tiny Bob, and kept him in high good humor until the other children came down stairs to the reality of a home without "mother." Then they had breakfast, and Maria washed, while Eliza dried, their mugs and plates. After that, Baby Bob began to show signs of hunger, and crammed his chubby fist into his mouth, and worried it in such a way that one would have thought he was starving.

Amongst them the children managed to supply his wants; for while Charley held him on his knee, with his little bib tucked tidily below his fat chin, and Maria stood by with the food in her hand, Eliza did the feeding business.

To the great delight of the youngsters, Baby Bob fell asleep in the very act of eating, at which Willie clapped his hands and laughed so loudly that the noise had very nearly waked him up again. Luckily he was checked in time by the whispered warning of Charley, and when the baby was laid in his cradle, the three younger

ones went out to play, while the eldest kept watch over his young charge.

Now was the time for study. Charley mended the fire, put the chairs in their places, and, reaching down his slate and books, began to work. First he set himself a sum, and did it, but, when finished, he was not sure that it was right, and he had no one to ask. However, he went over it three or four times, and did his best, by reckoning slowly and carefully, to make quite sure. Then he learned some words of spelling; and here he managed pretty well, by covering them with his hand while he repeated them aloud, and then looking to see if he had made any mistake. With grammar and geography he did not succeed very nicely, and every minute showed him how much he owed to the patient help of his teacher, and how little he could do without it. He could not look out the places either, for want of the great map which hung on the school-room wall; neither could he write in a book, because his was full; so he wrote his lesson

down on the slate, making the letters tolerably neat considering he had no copy, and was just crossing his last *t*, when a little scuffling, rustling noise made him turn round and look into the cradle. Baby Bob was awake, and the sound was caused by his stretching out his arms and kicking to throw off his bed-clothes.

No more lessons for to-day. Charley packed away books and slate as fast as he could, and lifted Bob—who was giving vent to his feelings by scolding in baby fashion—gently out of the cradle. Sleep had made the little one lively and good-tempered, and as the other children now came in they amused him till after dinner, and nursing was an easy matter.

But the time came when Baby Bob would no longer be contented without his mother. He began to cry, and the children, who thought that food ought to stop him, tried to give him some again. It would not do though. Bob threw himself back and struggled lustily. He opened his mouth wide enough, but it was in

order to scream freely. And when Eliza popped in a spoonful of his food he spluttered and frightened them by coughing, as if he were going to choke outright, so that the scream which followed almost comforted them, by showing there was nothing the matter, but that he was very cross, and wanted what only mother could give him.

"I must wrap him up and take him to mother," said Charley: "she told me I must, if he wouldn't be quiet without."

There was a scuffle, though, to get baby's hood on, and wrap him up in the warm woollen shawl, left ready in case it should be wanted. Indeed, the children were fairly mastered by this wilful little Bob, and Charley was in dismay as to how—if even he were dressed—he was to be carried through the streets, if he kept on screaming at such a rate, when a neighbor kindly came in and made him ready. Nay more, she managed to hush him into something like quietness, and Charley was able to carry him with no more noise than Bob made by worrying his fists for want of

anything better to amuse him on the road.

The visit to mother made all right, and comforted her too not a little, for she was beginning to feel very uneasy about her young folks at home, and was just going to ask leave to run and see what they were doing. She was very glad indeed that she was not now obliged to do that, for if she had left her work in the middle of the day she would have been later at night before she finished it.

The same kind neighbor who dressed Baby looked in again in the course of the afternoon, to see how they were all getting on, and she laughed at the picture she saw there, even while her own motherly heart throbbed with kindness and good-will. Charley, with a due sense of what rested on him as master of the house during his mother's absence, was insisting on the other children keeping rather too far from the fire, lest their clothes should catch it.

As his mother had warned him to be careful of coals, and he had obeyed her to

the letter, it would not have been very easy to set anything on fire, without trying very much to do it. Baby was on Eliza's knee, and all the children had a rather blue look, owing to cold. Charley was on his knees washing the hearth. He had already taken up the ashes from under the grate, and as his mother was to be home at six, and the youngsters were to have tea when she came, the boy meant to have a clean fireside, and—if the fire would burn up and do its part—the kettle boiling when she came.

And the neighbor, who saw what was wanted, gave the fire a little poke in the right place. A little blaze followed, and, by and by, the kettle began to sing.

There was one accident which rather spoiled matters, for Maria, in her zeal to set the tea-things, made too much haste, and broke a cup. For this she received a very severe rebuke from Charley, who had told her not to meddle with them till he had finished the fireside, and she was in tears about it when her mother came.

Mrs. Shepherd was not so severe as Charley, however. She was full of thankfulness at finding her children safe, and she knew that she must not expect too much from such young heads and feeble hands. So she only told Maria that she must try to be very careful not to break anything, because it would be hard for her to get money enough to buy more with.

Little Willie was very proud to think that he had not broken anything, and, with the rest, was duly kissed and praised. Charley's clean fireside was not forgotten, for though his mother could see that he had not quite kept within bounds, but had smeared the bricks around, as well as the hearth itself, with white stone, and that the knees of his trousers were not improved by being scraped upon the floor, she both thought and told him that he had done wonders. Still, she showed him how to manage without whitening the bricks, and gave him a little coarse apron to tie on,

and a mat to kneel upon when he next cleaned the fireside.

After tea, it was "early to bed" with all the young ones, for Mrs. Shepherd had plenty to do after they were asleep. So they were washed clean—a thing they all very much needed—and, after offering up their childish prayers, they went to rest.

Charley had tried his very best to keep Baby Bob awake—instead of letting him drop off to sleep as he wanted to do, after being carried through the sharp frosty air—that his tired parent might not be disturbed by him in the night. It had cost him aching limbs to do it, for everybody knows how hard it is to keep an infant's eyes open when it wants to shut them. But Charley would not spare himself at the cost of the one parent who was left him, and when he went to bed that night, he had the pleasure of thinking that, in spite of his being little, and weak, and young, he had both the will and the power to be of real use to his mother.

He was doing his best with the "one talent" given to him by his Heavenly Father.



CHAPTER III.

CHARLEY HAS ANOTHER VISITOR.—GOOD NEWS TO TELL
HIS MOTHER AT NIGHT.

THE next day was very like the one that was past, only while Charley went to take Bob to his mother at noon, a visitor called to see him. It was Mr. Fuller, the school-master, and when Charley came back he was sitting talking to Eliza, Maria, and little Will, who all stood round him, looking very much pleased about something.

Charley was much surprised to see Mr Fuller again so soon, and wondered what could have brought him. He had to hand Baby Bob to Eliza, before he could take off his cap to the master, who sat smiling at the entrance of the boy-nurse, almost

bending under the load of the stout child that he held so lovingly,

"Well, Charley," said the master, in a cheery voice, "here I am again. You did not expect to see me so soon, did you?"

"No, Sir," answered Charley; "but I'm very glad."

"And what a first-rate nurse you make," continued Mr. Fuller, as he saw Charley unpinning the warm shawl in which the baby was wrapped, and untying its little hood.

Charley looked much pleased at this praise, and rubbed Bob's little blue hands in his to warm them, while baby laughed and crowed under the operation. The sight of such a good-tempered face as Charley's might have infected the most crabbed baby in the world, and made it inclined to laugh and be amiable also.

"Now I must tell you what I have come about. *You* are forced to be housekeeper, I know, because you are the eldest of the family; but I have been thinking that you

have almost too many assistants when your mother is out."

"They are very good, Sir," said Charley, "only I could do without some of them."

"Very well. Now suppose the two youngest should come to school. I do'n't mean the little fellow on your knee," said he, laughing, and giving Bob's fat cheek a pat, "he is rather too small. But here are Maria and Willie, who will be all the better for teaching, I hope; and if your poor mother finds that she has plenty to do with her money without paying for her children's schooling, why they shall come free of all cost."

"Oh, Sir, you *are* good," cried Charley. "Mother will be so glad. She was saying only this morning how she wished she could afford to send those little ones to school, for Eliza would be quite plenty to stay with me, and help to take care of baby. Willie knows his letters, and Maria can read. Mother taught them, and Eliza too; but if poor father had come back

again, we were all to go to school together."

This was a long speech; but Charley's heart was full, and the words came very fast. Mr. Fuller listened patiently, and, when he had finished, said, "Then you may tell your mother all about it, Charles."

"Thank you, Sir. But won't you tell her, Mr. Fuller?"

"No, my boy, you, who are so anxious to save your kind mother pain, shall be the one to tell her what I hope she will think good news. As you cannot come to school yourself, you and your sister must try to help each other by reading and so on when the baby is asleep."

"I did read yesterday, Sir, and learned my lessons too. I did a sum, but I don't know whether it was right."

"Is it on your slate now, or did you rub it out?"

Baby Bob was once more transferred to Eliza, whilst Charley reached his slate down from the shelf where it lay with his school-books.

Mr. Fuller looked over the sum, and then said, "Right, Charles, all but one figure. Now you may send your slate by your sister to-morrow morning, and I will look at the two sums which I am putting down for you to do before then, if you have time. I can contrive to help you in this manner day by day."

Before passing the slate to Charley, Mr. Fuller noticed the writing on the other side, and added, "You want a master here too, my lad, I find; but that I have already thought about."

As he thus spoke, the schoolmaster opened a brown paper parcel—which Charley had noticed upon the table—and took from it two copy-books. One had copies of words for Charley to write, and the other had straight strokes, pot-hooks, and single letters, for Eliza to try her hand at.

Poor Charley was quite overcome with joy. He had always thought Mr. Fuller the *very wisest*, and one of the kindest men in the world; but to think he should not only guess the very things which his old

pupil most wished for, but really bring them for him, seemed almost too good to be true. He tried hard to thank his kind teacher, but voice failed him, and he fairly cried, while his face was all the while full of gladness.

Mr. Fuller left very happy children behind him, when, after saying good-bye to them all, he went away home. As he walked quickly along, the schoolmaster could not help thinking how good God was to bestow such a blessing upon the sailor's widow in her trouble as this little son, who truly honored his mother, and gave his best thoughts to doing his duty. He smiled to himself, too, when he thought of these young nurses, and of all the contrivances they must have to keep their little charge still during the day, and the good man was much moved at the picture he had seen. "If it were *my* wife and *my* little ones, who had lost husband and father, and were obliged to do as these do," he said in his heart; and then he offered a prayer, though a silent one, ask-

ing a blessing for Mrs. Shepherd and her children, and resolved to do what he could to assist them.

If Charley and the others had thought their mother long absent on the day before, they were still more impatient to see her at home that second evening, and it so happened that she was rather later. However, the hearth was cleaned, and the bricks washed around it, the tea-things had not suffered by breakage, and if ever a mother saw a group of bright faces, Mrs. Shepherd was the woman that night when she looked at her children. What a comfort it was to her, that when she reached home, with aching arms and tired feet, the children for whom she had been toiling all the day through, and about whom she had felt so very anxious, were all in safety. No wonder that her heart was filled with joy and thankfulness to God for taking care of them. "How have you got along all day, children?" was her first question, and every child of them answered it in some fashion.

"The schoolmaster has been here, mother," said little Will.

"When Charley was out," cried Maria.

"But he stayed till Charley came back," chimed in Eliza.

"And oh, mother, I have such good news to tell you," said Charley, as happy as a king at the thought of it.

"We have got on so well to-day, and there's nothing broken," put in the little cup-breaker of the day before.

"That is a good job; but what is this news that Charley wants so much to tell me? I can see that he is as eager as any thing; but you all talk at once, till he can't begin his tale, so be quiet, like good children, and, Charley, you tell me while I cut you all some bread."

"Mother, I am so glad I don't know what to do. Mr. Fuller has been to say that Willie and Maria are to go to school for nothing, as you haven't plenty of money to pay for them now. He will teach them all the same as though you could pay, and Eliza is to help me to

nurse, and we are to do our best to learn at home."

It needed a few questions and answers to make their mother understand all that kind Mr. Fuller had promised to do for the children, and she did lift her hands in surprise when she saw the copy-books, and found how he had contrived to help Charley and Eliza also, without their going to school.

She wiped her hands with her apron, saying, "It is a queer thing to cry because one is so glad, but I declare I can't keep from it. I'm just like a child."

When the tea was over, and the little pet, Baby Bob, sound asleep in his cradle, Mrs. Shepherd gathered the rest around her, saying, "Kneel down children, and let us thank God for his kindness in raising up a friend for us. The blessings are from him, though an earthly hand may bring them within our door."

In homely, but hearty words, the mother returned thanks to the Giver of all good, as she knelt in the midst of her children

before they went to rest. And afterwards, when they were all sleeping, she moved about the house feeling like a different creature. She had been full of doubts and fears, for there was so much in her present state to make her dread the future, and to think that she should never be able to gain bread for the little ones. But this act of kindness in Mr. Fuller had done her good, and showed her that God has the power to raise up friends for us in an hour of need, though we know not where such are to come from. Just as a small light takes away all the dread and gloom from what was total darkness, so did Mr. Fuller's promise bring a bright hope into this poor mother's heart, and prevent her from seeing beyond the present good which was close to her.

It was a great thing for Mrs. Shepherd to know that two of the youngsters were at school during half the number of hours that she was absent, and it proved a great relief, too, to the little head nurse. When they were all at home, Baby Bob's sleeps

were often broken, because the others were not still. But with only Charley and Eliza, there was a longer time of rest, and the children tried to profit by the help which Mr. Fuller contrived to give them also.

However weary Mrs. Shepherd might be, she always made a bit of sewing ready for her little girls to do the next day, and if Eliza had been slippery and careless, and had made big stitches instead of small ones, she had to pick her work out again. She did not like this at all, but cried, and thought it was quite too bad of "mother." But she learned to take more pains, and, after a while, she could sew both well and quickly. Then she was glad that she had been taught to do her work properly, as it had become easy to her.

Of course Mrs. Shepherd was not out every day. She was obliged to stay at home sometimes to do her own housework and mend her children's clothes; but even then Charley and Eliza could not both be spared from home. They were allowed

to go to school when they had a day to spare from nursing; but it was not often this happened, though the master invited them without telling Mrs. Fuller that he had offered to teach Charley before he took the two younger ones. With the boy it was a holiday *to go to school*, instead of its being thought one to stay away.



CHAPTER IV.

MORE STRUGGLES.—CHARLEY'S FIRST EARNINGS AND
THE LANDLORD'S VISIT.

IN time Baby Bob grew used to his mother's absence, and fonder and fonder of Charley. Indeed it was rather awkward that he loved him so well, for he never liked to be in Eliza's arms when his brother was near. The little rogue had found out that of the two Charley was the better nurse, and was never satisfied anywhere but in his arms.

With all Mrs. Shepherd's hard work, she could not earn enough to get necessities for her children. The coals and rent took such a very large slice out of her weekly money, that there really was but a small sum left for food and clothes.

The hungry youngsters coming in from school often found but a scanty supply of bread, with perhaps a herring or a bit of dripping to flavor it, for their dinners. Charley often saw tears in his mother's eyes, and he knew well what they meant. Many a night the poor lad lay awake wondering what he could do to help his mother, and as he thought that he was already doing all in his power, he wept because he was so weak.

Still he did behave like a little hero. He knew that his mother looked very sorrowful if she came home and found that the children had been quarrelling with or cross to each other, and he tried so much to keep peace in the house for her sake. At first, when left housekeeper, he used to be very fond of giving orders and scolding,

as if he were really a great person and master over the rest. And so it happened, that when Mrs. Shepherd came in, she heard the little ones begin to complain that Charley had been ordering them about, and then *he* said that they had been naughty, and would not do as he wished.

Then the poor mother's face would look sadder still, and she would grieve to think her children had no parent to guide them and lead them in the right way.

"Children," she said to them, "you should try to 'love one another.' That is what Jesus said we were to do. Neither the grown-up man nor the little child can be His disciple without the spirit of love is in him. And though your poor father is drowned in the deep sea, and I am forced to be away from you, the good God always sees you, and knows whether you are kind to one another or not." Besides talking to them all together, she took Charley aside, and told him how she looked to him for comfort, because

he was the eldest; and said that if he loved her, he would be very gentle to the other children, both because it was right, and for her sake.

After that, Charley scolded no more. There were no complaints from little Will that Charley had been cross and made him cry, or from Maria that he would not let her have a mug to get a drink of water, because she had once broken a cup. With due care for the crockery, Charley would go himself to fetch the water, and when meals became scanty and poor, the lad contrived many ways of making them seem better than they really were.

What little child does not remember the make-believe feasts which she enjoyed so much with her playmates. Nay, if the fathers and mothers were to look back, I am pretty sure they could call to mind what *they* did with tiny cups and saucers, and how an apple cut up in very small bits, on plates of size to match, was made to answer to a great many different names.

And how much better the things tasted when drunk out of those cups and eaten off those plates.

Well, just in the same way did Charley and Maria set out feasts to be ready when the other two came from school. Not that *they* had pretty cups and saucers and plates, but they had something else instead. In fact, they had had two sets of plates; one of oyster-shells, with limpet-shells—which too often would topple over—for cups, and large cockle-shells for saucers. The other plates were bits of broken china which they had picked up on the road whenever they saw what they called “a pretty one” that was nearly round.

On the larger pieces—those were the dishes—were piles of bits of bread, and on others still smaller portions of the herring, and Charley and Eliza used to take pains to make the feast look as though it were made up of a great many different sorts of dainties. Then they would call one dish beef, and another chicken, or, maybe, roast goose, or veal. Sometimes

the bread would be called plum-pudding, or apple-tart, and so on. Thus by playing at having a very fine dinner indeed, the children sometimes almost forgot that it was such a poor one.

But this could not last always, neither could the house be left to such young heads and hands without hurt or damage to the furniture. In spite of Charley's care, little articles were broken and destroyed. Pinafores, frocks, and stockings were dirty as soon again as they used to be when mother's presence made the youngsters careful, to say nothing of the grim faces and hands of their wearers. Mrs. Shepherd said they were like little blackamoors when she came home at night. And what a scrubbing they had to undergo, before they could lie down in a clean bed, nobody would believe.

One day Charley's heart felt heavier than common. He knew all that came into the house in the way of money, and when his mother paid her fortnight's rent; he knew, too, that so far it had always

gone at the right time exactly: but on that morning she had not enough money to pay it, if even she took the whole of it and left none for their other wants. "What shall we do?" thought Charley. "If mother cannot pay the rent we shall be turned out of the house, I know."

It was a hard thought for a child of nine years old, and Charley broke down under it. To the great dismay of Eliza, instead of learning lessons when Bob went to sleep, he fairly burst into tears, and laying his head upon his hands, sobbed long and bitterly.

"Charley, do tell me what is the matter!" said Eliza, quite terrified, and beginning to cry, too, for company.

"I wish I was a big lad: I wish I could earn some money to help mother. Poor mother! She does work so hard, and gets only a little after all. What will she do!"

The sobs came faster and faster, and Eliza's tears kept pace with them. She, poor child, had never thought as Charley had about her mother's troubles; but when

she saw him, who was the comfort of them all, crying as though his very heart would break, she began to understand them in a different way. "Don't cry, Charley dear, don't cry," she said, wiping her own wet cheeks with her pinafore, unchecked by her brother, who, if he had been less troubled, would have shown her that she was crumpling it all up in a heap.

For a little while Charley heeded nothing. Eliza fetched slate and books, but they could not comfort him, or show him how the rent was to be paid, and "mother's" mind set at rest. He pushed them aside, and said, "I can't learn to-day. I am thinking about mother. How will she get some more money?"

"She will have another shilling to-night, Charley," replied Eliza.

"But that won't make plenty. If I could get some for her—"

Charley pondered, as he had done many a time before, and still could see no way of doing more than he was already doing. At last he asked Eliza if she would stay

in the house by herself while he went out to try.

The child looked half afraid of being left in sole charge, and Charley was doubtful whether he ought to go, after all; but as Bob was pretty sure to be an hour asleep at least, he thought he might venture. So, without any clear notion of what he was going to do, Charley started on his way to try to earn something. At the end of the street he stood for a minute considering which way to turn, and then went to the right hand because there were the most people and shops that way. He watched a gentleman on horseback, in the hope that he would stop, and that he might get a penny for holding the bridle; but to no purpose. Then another came on a pretty pony, and he did stop. Just as his foot touched the ground, Charley's hand was lifted to his cap, and he said, "Please, Sir, may I hold him for you?"

The gentleman smiled, but shook his head. "No, thank you, my lad," he replied; "he is used to standing still for the

short time he is left. If he were not, I should want a boy many times a day."

Charley felt almost sorry that the Doctor's pony was so very quiet, and passed on again, fearing there was nothing for his small hands to do amidst all that crowd of busy people. Three or four times he walked along the street, and half of the utmost period that he could allow himself to be absent from home was gone. He was just about to turn back, for the last walk down the street, when a hairdresser, who was standing at his shop-door, said, "Charley, have you seen my boy anywhere? I sent him on an errand more than an hour since, and the young rascal has not come back."

"No, Sir," said Charley, "I have never seen him. Can I go seek him for you?"

"That would be a long business, my boy, I am afraid. When Jem once runs out of his proper way, he is hard to find. And he knew that I was so busy, and wanted him to go to half a dozen places at least."

"Here's a chance for me," thought Charley; and he said aloud, "Please, Sir, can I go anywhere for you? I'll be very quick if you only like to trust me."

The hairdresser noticed the boy's wishful face, so he replied, "Well, Charley, I've known you ever since you were the height of the table, and I believe you are a good lad. Your mother gives you a kind word for being steady at home, and I do think that children who honor their parents are generally the best to trust to. But now, tell me, can you be spared to go some errands for me, and earn a penny or two? Is your mother out to-day?"

"Yes, Sir, she is, but Eliza's at home, and Baby Bob's asleep, and he's sure not to wake up yet, or else he would want me. So I thought I would run out and see if I could do anything to earn a penny; and oh, Sir, I shall be glad if I may go your errands."

Without any more words, the hairdresser gave Charley a box to carry to one place, and a packet of fine soap and perfume to

take to another, having first satisfied himself that the lad knew the way and the houses at which he must call. Oh, yes, Charley knew the way, and how his feet went over the ground to be sure! He did not stop to look in at the shop-windows. He had had enough, and too much of that while he was waiting about seeking for something to do. He had to pass his own home, but he shot by like an arrow for fear Eliza should spy him and try to detain him. Soon he delivered both his parcels, and as he was hastening back he saw the lost errand-boy playing at marbles with some of his idle companions.

"Come here, Charley," shouted Jem "Come and have a game: you don't get much play now-a-days."

"I can't," said Charley, shaking his head and looking as though he meant it too.

At this moment a wrong thought crossed Charley's mind as he asked himself the question, "Should I tell Jem that his master wants him or should I not?"

He felt that it would be right to tell;

but then if Jem went back to the shop directly, there would be no more work for him, and he had waited so long in the hope of getting something to do. This was a temptation, and Charley at first listened to it, and passed on without warning Jem that Mr. Harrison, his master, wanted him back at the shop again.

But he did not feel comfortable after all. He remembered that his mother always said, "A little honestly earned is worth a great deal that is ill-gotten," and, "An honest penny is better than a score of dishonest pounds."

It cost him a struggle with himself to go back and tell Jem that his master was looking for him, and was not pleased at his staying so long away from the shop, when he knew it was a busy time with him.

"I shall come directly," replied Jem.

"But hadn't you better come *now*?" asked Charley.

"I'll just finish this game. Five minutes won't make much difference," said the other, aiming a marble, at the moment and

while he was speaking. "Mind though, you mustn't say I am here," he added.

"Not unless Mr. Harrison asks me; then I must tell the truth."

"Then wait for me if you're going that way. You needn't hurry so. I never do, because it's no good taking too much trouble."

But Charley only just heard these last words, for finding Jem would not leave the marbles, he hurried on without waiting any longer, and was much praised by Mr Harrison for coming back so quickly.

"Good boy, Charley. This is the way to be trusted again. Did you see Jem on the road?"

"Yes, Sir," replied Charley.

"And I'll be bound you didn't tell him to make haste home because I wanted him."

"I did, though, Sir."

"And he was playing as usual, and would not come either for your telling or because I had bidden him make haste. I suppose, as you told him *that*, you don't want to go on any more errands for me?"

Mr. Harrison looked curiously at Charley as he spoke. The truth was, he was trying the lad, and wanted to know what he would say.

"But I do, Sir, I'm sure," replied Charley, eagerly.

"Then, why did you tell Jem to come home, when you knew if I had him I shouldn't want you?"

"Because I thought I *ought* to tell him. If you had asked me if I'd seen him, and never sent me on an errand at all, I should have told him he was wanted as soon as I really had a chance."

Charley would have liked to explain himself more plainly, perhaps; but not knowing very well how to do it, he became silent. However, his hearer understood him quite well.

"You shall go one more errand," said the hairdresser, "as Master Jem has not thought good to come. You will not have to go far, and when you return, I will give you what you have earned, and you shall run home to that tyrant of a baby. I

should think now," added Mr. Harrison, "you didn't spend long in trying to persuade Jem to come home?"

"I didn't stay long, Sir, because I wanted to make haste; but I told Jem you were looking for him, and not pleased because he hadn't come back sooner."

"That was quite right, Charles. Do you think, now, you can spare time to go this other errand for me?"

"Yes, Sir, I shall be very glad," said Charley, and he was about to start, when he saw Jem running towards the shop. "There," thought he, "this will lose me my work, but I must tell Mr. Harrison for all that," and so he did.

"Never mind, my lad, you shall go, for I can trust you, and I cannot trust Jem; so off you run, and make haste."

Jem arrived just in time to hear these last words, and very angry he felt at the idea of his master's choosing Charley Shepherd instead of himself. Yet he ought not to have been angry, because his conscience must have told him that he had been trusted

again and again, and deceived his master by wasting the time which was really not his own, because he was bound to use it in doing the work that was given him to perform, and for which he was paid.

Charley was not long before he came back, all rosy and smiling; but in the meanwhile Mr. Harrison had scolded Jem severely, and told him that he should be forced to dismiss him, and have a lad whom he could trust. This had not made Jem any better pleased with Charley, and he contrived to whisper a threat in the ear of the latter, but unheard by his master.

"I've done nothing wrong to you, Jem," was his reply. "Your master wouldn't have wanted me if you'd come home in time, and as to 'serving me out,' I'm not afraid, though you are a bigger lad than I am. I've been working to earn a penny or two for my mother. She hasn't a kind husband to work for her now;" and at the thought of the sad change which had come over the little household at home, Charley

found it very hard to keep the tears down. He did manage it, though, "for he wasn't going to make a baby of himself before that Jem," as he afterwards told his sister Eliza.

The master's back was turned during this short talk between the boys. He was, in fact, busy cutting a great hunch of bread and meat, for as he had only a shop, and not a whole house there, he was in the habit of keeping some provisions in a closet, so that he could take a cold dinner when he was too busy to go home for a hot one. He turned round with the bread and meat in his hand, saying as he did so, "Here, Charley, take this and eat it on your way if you like. I dare say you are hungry enough with running about so long. And here's three-pence for you beside."

"Thank you, Mr. Harrison, thank you, Sir," said Charley again and again, hardly knowing what to say to express his gratitude for such ample pay as this. Then, making a very low bow, he bade Mr. Har-

rison "good afternoon," and ran away as fast as his legs would carry him.

"Now mind, Sir," said Mr. Harrison to the truant Jem, "if I have to hire a lad to do your work again, I shall stop his payment out of your wages. That poor little orphan lad is worth a dozen such as you, for he honours his mother, and does all he can to help her, while you are a plague both to your parents and me. But you won't torment me much longer, my lad, for you shall either improve or quit altogether."

Finding that his master was in earnest, Jem durst not reply saucily, as he was too much in the habit of doing when found fault with, but for the rest of the day he attended to his work steadily and quietly, so as to need no further reproof.

Charley meanwhile had arrived at home, with a feeling of being oh! so rich. He almost burst open the door in his haste to tell Eliza of his success, and the noise he made woke up Baby Bob, who had slept until then. Down Charley popped the

three pence—or rather six half-pence, for such they were—upon the table, saying, “Look here, Eliza, these are all mine. I earned them by going on errands for Mr. Harrison, the hairdresser in High Street. Now wasn’t it a capital idea of mine to go seek something to do. Hurrah!”

Charley tossed his old cap up to the ceiling, which bumped it down again upon Bob’s nose as he lay in the cradle, and then he fairly danced round the kitchen, until Baby, neglected by his eldest brother for the first time, set up a cry which silenced Charley, and stopped his wild capering in a moment. Down he bent and put his arms round Bob to lift him out of the cradle; no easy matter, now that the little fellow was getting older and stouter every day. Charley fairly panted again as he hoisted him up first into a sitting posture, and then fairly into his own arms.

At this moment something made the kitchen darker, and, looking up at the window, Charley and Eliza saw that a stout man was gazing at them over the

short curtains. Directly afterwards he rapped at the door, and, before they had time to open it, lifted the latch and walked in.

The boy knew very well who this new comer was. He was the landlord, Mr. Hopkins, and no doubt he wanted the rent, which ought to have been paid the day before.



CHAPTER V.

“MOTHER” GOES TO SEE THE LANDLORD, AND COMES BACK WITH A LIGHTER HEART THAN SHE HAD WHEN SHE STARTED.

BABY BOB had not quite ceased crying when the landlord came, for he was very hungry, and, having had a longer sleep than common, he wanted the food, which was always given to him as soon as he awoke, by his little nurses.

"Is your mother at home, boy?" asked Mr. Hopkins, turning to Charley.

"No, Sir," he answered; "mother is out at work; but she'll be home about six o'clock. Do you want her, Sir?"

"No, boy, I don't want her," replied the landlord, meaning his answer to sound like a joke, "but I want my rent. She ought to have paid it yesterday, and you must tell her—I suppose you can remember a message, eh?"—

"Yes, Sir," said Charley, in a meek, half-frightened voice, for the landlord spoke loudly and roughly, and the lad's fear about the rent was all brought back by his presence.

"Very well. Tell your mother that she must bring the rent, without fail, to-morrow. I know when people, who are fixed as she is, get behind, they can't make up for lost way. If they can't pay a fortnight's rent they can't pay a month's, that's certain. Now mind you tell her just what I say, and that I can't afford to lose my money."

"Yes, Sir," again replied Charley, feeling smaller and weaker than ever; aye, and poorer too, when in sight of the stout, loud-voiced landlord.

Mr. Hopkins turned to go, and, as he did so, caught sight of the six half-pennies spread out upon the table. "Whose is this money?" he asked, quite sharply.

"It is mine, Sir," said Charley.

"I'm glad to hear it, boy. Your mother can't be so badly off if she leaves you so much to throw about."

"Please, Sir, I earned it, but mother doesn't know about it yet."

"You earned it!—a likely story!" said the landlord with a laugh.

"I did, Sir. I went some errands for Mr. Harrison, the hairdresser. You may ask him, Sir, if you don't believe me."

The boy looked so frightened, and yet so honest, that the landlord was amused. He had a rough voice, and was rather apt to think that people meant to cheat him, and that everybody would do it if he did not look very sharp after his money. Be-

sides, he often had lost by trusting poor tenants too long; but he was not a very unkind man after all. He knew that Mrs. Shepherd had had a great trouble, yet had always paid her rent, so far, in spite of her being so much poorer. So he spoke once more to Charley, and this time in a gentler voice. "What are you going to do with all this money of yours, boy? Spend it in lollipops, I'll be bound, as soon as I am gone."

"Oh, Sir, I wouldn't do such a thing," said Charley. "I earned it to help mother, and she wants it all, and more a great deal than I can get for her. Besides, I never earned a penny before, though I got this all at once."

The lad seemed rather proud that his first wages were so large a sum as three-pence, and a little of the feeling of wealth, which he had when he first pressed the half-pence in his palm, came back to him. But then again he thought, "What a little it is to what mother wants," and his fancied riches all faded away. He was not

the little lad with money of his own, but the one whose poor hard-working mother had not enough to pay her rent.

The landlord saw the smile fade away from Charley's face again, and his own voice dropped lower still. "So you meant to give your mother all your money, did you? Good lad. And I dare say you like lollipops too. Will you let me have this money towards the rent now, eh?"

"Yes, Sir, I will. But please, Sir—" Charley stopped, as if afraid to finish what he had begun to say.

"Please what? Don't look so frightened. Go on, my lad."

"Please, Sir, as I never earned anything before, I should like mother to see this money."

"Why isn't one half-penny just like another?" said Mr. Hopkins.

But he laughed for all that, and left the money lying on the table; and though he once more told Charley he was to be sure and not forget the message about the rent, he did not speak in that first gruff, cross

voice which had made both the children tremble, and frightened Baby Bob into silence and staring at the stranger.

The door closed behind the landlord, and the children began to feed the little one, who had again found out that he was hungry. This business over, Charley said, "I've got something else in my pocket, Eliza. Just you take hold of baby, and I'll show you what it is."

Eliza looked very curious as Charley tugged and tugged at a parcel wrapped up in two or three bits of paper, one put on sideways and another endways, because neither was large enough by itself to cover the contents.

She soon caught sight of a lump of bread, and then of a thick substantial slice of meat, while Charley viewed her with a glance of great triumph in his possessions.

"What do you think of that now?" said he, when the last paper was taken off, and Mr. Harrison's gift lay bare before her eyes

"Oh, Charley! Where did you get that? What nice bread and meat! Did you buy it?"

"No. Somebody gave me this as well as the money. Now, you see I was right to go and try to earn something, wasn't I?"

"And you didn't eat it yourself?"

"Not a bite of it," said Charley, feeling as happy in his self-denial as any king.

"What will you do with it? Will you eat it now?"

"No. I shall save it a while longer."

"For mother?" inquired Eliza, looking rather sorry at the idea of further saving.

"Not for mother, for you know she gets plenty of good meat and things when she is out. Don't you remember she was crying last night when she talked about having such nice dinners, and saying she could hardly bear to eat them when she thought of us having such poor ones at home? But it's a very good thing she has, for they make her stronger, and better able to work for us, and that comforts her."

"Then who will you give the bread and meat to, Charley?"

"It is for all of us to have at tea, to be sure. We'll make a feast and have *real* beef for once. Cut in four, this will make quite big pieces, so we'll get it ready before Willie and Maria come in from school."

"But cover the meat up, Charley," said Eliza. "It makes me hungry to see it there, looking so nice."

And Charley covered it up, and kept it so until it was shown at tea-time to the no less astonished eyes of Willie and Maria, though, most likely, as he had been running about in the cold wind, he was quite as hungry as any one of them.

The meal was finished and the tea-things put away before the mother came home. She had told them not to wait, as she should not be with them quite so early as usual, so they only told her what a treat Charley had given them. "And Charley has something for you, mother," said Eliza.

Mrs. Shepherd looked very tired and

grave, but she did not tell her children to be quiet, though, perhaps, their busy tongues made her aching head ache still more. Far from complaining of their noise, she was thankful to see them so cheerful, and always listened patiently to their little tales of pleasures they had contrived during her absence. A little act of thoughtful kindness shown by them towards her, or to each other, would bring glad tears into her eyes and thankful words to her lips. The love of her children was her riches, now their father was gone, buried with all the crew of the "Eagle," and the good ship itself below the blue waters.

"And what has Charley for me?" said Mrs. Shepherd.

The lad did not speak, but, diving into his trousers pocket, he brought out his half-dozen half-pennies, and spread them on the table, to the great surprise of his mother.

"Why, I do declare, Charley," exclaimed the good woman, "you are the luckiest

lad. Who has been giving you money again?"

"Nobody this time, mother: I earned it my own self."

And then the story of Charley's first wages was told again, to the delight of Mrs. Shepherd, who, though she much wanted every penny she could honestly gain, was far more pleased at the motive which had sent her child out to try to earn something to help her, than she was at the sight of the money itself. She kissed her boy as he proudly thrust his little treasure into her hand, and as her cheek touched his, the lad felt that it was moist with a tear.

"Charley," said she, "you are a kind boy, a blessing and a comfort to your mother, who prays that God will give you all the good things which he has promised to dutiful children. I think as much of these few coppers as though they were bright gold sovereigns, and I would keep them in remembrance of you always if I could."

"But you can't, you know, mother.

Never mind though; I'll try and earn some more to help pay the rent. Mr. Hopkins has been here to-day, mother," he added in a lower tone, as if he were sorry to give the message left by the landlord.

"I almost expected he would be coming, for he never lets anybody alone long if their rent is due, Charley. Yet he never had to wait a day for mine before. Was he very cross? Tell me what he said."

Charley repeated the landlord's words, and then asked, "Can you pay him, mother?"

"With your three-pence I should have just enough."

"Well, what a good thing!" shouted Charley, clapping his hands. "To think I should just earn the right money. I never knew anything so funny in all my life."

"And I have been thinking ever since I saw the half-pence, 'Surely it was the good God himself who put it into my child's heart to try to do a little towards earning

a living.' I was troubling myself to-night as I walked home from work, for I knew I had not quite enough money for the rent, and three-pence is quarter of a day's earnings. And here, by the hand of my boy, by this small hand," said Mrs. Shepherd, as she spread out Charley's childish fingers with her own rough ones, "is sent what I needed. But it comes from God—it comes from God."

As the mother spoke, she seemed almost to have forgotten the presence of her children, so much was she taken up with this thought, that God had allowed her little want to be supplied by the hand of her eldest lad, thus making the few half-pence so very precious.

Mrs. Shepherd put the younger children to bed; and then, taking every penny she had, put on her bonnet and shawl, that she might go and pay Mr. Hopkins his rent.

"Will you pay it, mother?" inquired Charley: "I thought you said you had no more."

"I have no more, Charley; but I will

pay the rent for all that. I believe God will send me the means of earning bread for you all, though I have nowhere to go to-morrow that I know of. However, we can manage for two days if I get no money."

Away went Mrs. Shepherd, and soon reached her landlord's door. Mr. Hopkins was at home, and looked pleased to see her when he found out why she had come. "I called at your house this afternoon," said he. "Forced to call and see people sometimes, for fear they should forget to call and see me, eh?"

"I should not have forgotten," said Mrs. Shepherd, feeling a little hurt at the way in which he spoke. "I never did yet, Mr. Hopkins; and though things are not as they used to be at our house"—her voice trembled, so she stopped for a minute—"still I always have paid you to the very day, Sir; and I should have come to-night without sending for, if you had not called to-day, though the rent has taken my last penny."

She turned to go, but Mr. Hopkins stopped her. "Wait a minute, wait a minute; don't be in such a hurry. I want to talk to you."

"Sir, my children have been by themselves all day, and now the youngest are in bed, and the others ought to be, only they are keeping house till I go back; so I am rather in a hurry to get back to them," returned Mrs. Shepherd.

"Aye, the children, to be sure. I was going to say that is a good lad of yours. He showed me his first earnings to-day, and I fancy he felt rather rich with his three-pence."

"He is a good lad, Mr. Hopkins," replied the mother, warmly. "I thank God for my son, and, indeed, for all my children, poor things! It is hard work for me to get them what they want; but it would be a deal harder to part with any of them, though I have five. If my Charley had not earned the three-pence, Mr. Hopkins, I must have paid you that short in your rent, Sir."

“Good lad—very. I knew you had brought his money by this half-penny that has a hole in it. Thought I should very likely get it, though he wouldn’t let me have it to-day when I asked him if I might take that to help towards the rent. He said he should like to show it to his mother.”

Mr. Hopkins tossed up the half-penny with the hole in it as he spoke, and seemed to think it a good joke that he should have got it after all.

“It was natural that he should like me to see his money—his little wages, as he called them,” said Mrs. Shepherd; and again the thought of her lad at home brought tears into her eyes.

“To be sure, to be sure,” and Mr. Hopkins nodded. “Now look here. You take these coppers back to Charley, all but the half-penny with the hole in it. That I shall give to my lad, who is a deal bigger than yours, and ask him when he’ll ever earn a penny?”

“Ah, Sir, your children have a father.”

“Yes, Mrs. Shepherd, they know that quite well; and so long as I scrape money together, they find means enough of spending it. But never mind that, they’re not bad lads either, when all is said and done. But about this three-pence, for I’ve put another half-penny instead of that one; you give them to Charley, and tell him I hope he’ll earn many more, and always put them to as good a use as the first wages, which he was so proud to give his hard-working mother. And here’s a shilling for you, Mrs. Shepherd, for I can’t have it said that I took a widow’s last mite, and left her nothing to buy her children a supper with.”

Mrs. Shepherd began to thank her landlord, but he interrupted her rather sharply, as if he were almost ashamed of being so soft-hearted, and asked if she were going anywhere to work the next morning.

“No, Mr. Hopkins,” she replied, “I have no place for to-morrow.”

“Then if you like you may come to clean my offices. You will have to go

home to your dinner, for I have none here for you; but I shall give you the same as I would anybody else—half-a-crown for the job. Now, good-night. Go home to your children.”

The landlord held the light for Mrs. Shepherd to see her way down the steep stairs which led to his office; and she, after thanking him, hastened home to her family.

“You must be tired, mother,” were Charley’s first words, as he pulled her chair to the fire, ready for her to sit down upon. Charley did not need telling to do these little kindnesses for his mother. It was a pleasure to him to feel that his feet could sometimes save hers a step, or the work of his hands allow her to rest a little. Yet the child scarcely knew how greatly he helped his mother by these free-will services, rendered just because he loved her, and strove to show his affection, not in words only, but by many a loving deed. Trifling these actions might be, yet it is such things as these that

make happy homes, whether practised by young or old.

Mrs. Shepherd seated herself by the fire, and, in answer to Charley, said, "I don't feel near so tired now, my boy."

"Because the rent is paid, mother."

"And I have work for to morrow, and money in my pocket as well. Oh, Charley! God is good."

Thus the mother's first thankful thoughts were raised to *Him*, to acknowledge His mercy in all things. It was no wonder that her children learned to honor her, for she was "a woman that feared the Lord," and gave Him "the honor due to His Name," taking all good gifts as of His bestowing. And when trouble came, she used to whisper to herself words out of God's own book—"Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

Charley and his mother had a pleasant hour before bed-time that night, she telling, and he listening to what had passed when she went to pay her rent to Mr. Hop-

kins, who, after all, sent back the lad's "first earnings."

CHAPTER VI.

THE NEW LODGER.—CHARLEY'S DISOBEDIENCE, AND ITS FRUITS.

MRS. SHEPHERD cleaned her landlord's offices to his perfect satisfaction, and received for her labor more than she had ever gained by a day's work before. Baby Bob was not carried to her at the dinner hour, as was usual, because she came home; and she told Charley on no account to go out, as a sudden thaw had almost flooded the streets. "Indeed," she said, "Maria and Willie may stay at home this afternoon, for their shoes are not very strong, and the damp may give them cold."

Willie lifted up his foot forthwith, and showed his mother what was no very wel-

come sight. His small boots were not only very wet, but there was a hole at the side of one of them. Of course the stocking was worn too, and there was poor Willie's little bare toe sticking out through both. This was a serious business, and what the mother had been dreading to see. While she had worked from day to day, and only just earned sufficient to find very homely food, and scarcely enough of it, beside paying the rent, the little ones were wearing out their clothes, and how was she to buy them new? Small feet take many steps, running over the ground twice where their elders would make once suffice, and every step did something towards wearing out shoes; till the end of the matter was, first, Willie's bare toe, and next, a wet patch on Maria's stocking, which showed, that though there was not quite a hole in the sole of her boot, it was the next thing to it, and must be taken in time.

"I declare," said Mrs. Shepherd, "you will all want new boots directly, and where they are to come from I don't know. They

cost so much, and when there are so many feet—oh, dear me! it is serious.”

The next minute she caught sight of some of the faces round her; and the good mother's heart smote her for having said anything about the number of feet, when she thought to herself what a trouble it would be for her to lose the patter of any of these small feet on the floor. So she added, “Children, I don't mean that there are too many of you, for I love you all dearly; but you must try to be contented with what I can get you, and take care of your clothes, for mother's sake, because she has only one pair of hands.”

“And, mother,” said Charley, “you didn't know that Mr. Hopkins would give you either any money or a day's work; so maybe something else will come that you don't expect, and you will get Willie a pair of new boots.”

“So there may, Charley. I must trust in Him who feedeth the ravens and clothes the grass of the field, for the means of feeding and clothing my little ones also.”

Then Mrs. Shepherd took the boots to get mended as she went back to her work, leaving the children all at home together.

"We're forced to stay in to-day, however," said Maria.

"And oh! my toe does hurt me," cried Willie.

"I wish we could earn boots and shoes for ourselves," put in thoughtful Charley. "I wonder how many three-pences would be enough to buy you a new pair, Willie, for you want them more than any of us. I have that three-pence yet that Mr. Harrison paid me and our landlord gave me back again; and I'll tell you what, I'll try and get enough before long."

"What! to buy me boots?" asked Willie, with very wide-open eyes at the bare possibility of such a thing.

"Yes, as soon as ever I can, I'll go some more errands for people, and you shall have all the money I get; at least, my mother shall have it to buy things for you children."

Somehow, Charley had begun to feel

himself quite old, since he had seen so much of his mother's daily struggles, which, indeed, she could not hide; and this battling with the world makes the young grow old before their time. It was well for Charley, though, that he not only saw his mother's trials, but her faith in God's great goodness, her trust that *He* would care for them, though all earthly friends should forget them.

The air was milder that afternoon, though the melted snow had made the streets like one great puddle; and imprisoned as well the children who had shoes to go out in, as those who had not. Charley wrapped a shawl round Baby Bob, and took him to the door, that he might be pleased at the sight of the people who were passing backwards and forwards in the street.

Baby Bob had been amused in this way for a good while, and Charley was just coming in, and about to shut the door, when a neat-looking woman, dressed in black, such as his mother now wore on

Sundays, stepped up, and asked where Mrs. Smithson lived?

"She used to live next door," said Charley, "but she has gone away now to another town a long way off. The house is shut up you see, ma'am, at present."

"I thought this must be the right place, though I am a stranger. She used to let lodgings, didn't she, my dear?"

"Yes, Ma'am; she had somebody living in her front room once," replied Charley. A bright thought struck him as he spoke. What if mother would have a lodger in her front room too; it would help to pay the rent. There would be no harm in asking if this pleasant-looking woman wanted lodgings, and Charley followed up the thought by making the inquiry.

"I want one furnished room, my dear," was the answer. "Can you tell me of any person who would like to let one?"

Charley wasn't sure about it until mother came home; but he thought she might know, only she wouldn't be in before seven o'clock at the very soonest.

"I'll call at seven," said the woman, "for I want to get a place to suit me somewhere in this neighborhood. I have a son at sea, and he sails from here. Good afternoon, my dear. I shall be sure to come again."

Charley didn't know whether he had done right in even saying that the woman might call to see his mother; and he was very anxious indeed as seven o'clock approached, for fear the stranger should arrive before her. Mrs. Shepherd had always told her children to keep the door fast after dark; and to let no person in, unless it was a friend whom they knew. "And if this stranger woman should come before mother does," thought Charley, "what shall I do? It will be so queer to keep her standing outside in the wet, if she would wait there at all; and if I let her in, maybe mother won't be pleased."

The boy was quite in trouble; but, happily, "mother" came first, and Charley had time to tell her his thought.

"A very good idea, Charles, if I only knew the person. By letting the room I

might make the rent much easier, for I feel that I cannot go on paying three shillings a week, out of my earnings, for a house. I was looking round to-day to see if I could find out a cheaper one; but I was so troubled to think of taking you poor children into a little, dark, dirty court to live, that I thought I would try to trust another week."

A rap at the door, which Charley ran to open, stopped the mother's words; and there outside stood the stranger. She was asked in, and told Mrs. Shepherd of her sailor son, and of her being a widow who wanted a little quiet home to live in, while he was far away on the ocean.

She knew some people in the town, and Mrs. Shepherd knew them too, and was able to ask them about the stranger. So the end of it was that the little treasures were removed from the front parlor. The cocoa-shell cups and husks, the branching coral, and the other pretty things—which "father" had brought from foreign lands in those happy days when Charley and the

rest could reckon on his gifts---were all put into or on the drawers in the bedrooms, and Mrs. Parks came to lodge in the front room. She was to pay half-a-crown a week, which Charley thought was a great deal, considering his mother paid only six-pence more for the whole house, parlor and all. He said so to his mother, and she replied, "You forget that I have the house empty from Mr. Hopkins, and the parlor has nice furniture in it."

"But still it is a good thing, mother, isn't it?" persisted Charley.

"A very good thing, for now I shall have a chance of buying clothes with the money which must have gone to pay the rent, and it will be a comfort to think that when I am away at work there is an older head under the roof with these young ones," and she patted Baby Bob's cheek as she said it. For though both Charley and the rest had done wonders, when all things were considered, yet Mrs. Shepherd felt each night when she came home that she had to praise God for His goodness in

having kept her children in safety, exposed as they were to more than common peril for want of a parent's presence.

Mrs. Parks proved a very pleasant addition to the family. The good woman's heart was deeply touched at the sight of these young orphan children, and she thought all the more of them from having a son far away at sea. "They are a sailor's orphans," said she to herself, "and perhaps *my* boy is now receiving kindness from some good soul in another land. At any rate, he'll be all the more likely to meet with it if I do my part to these poor things."

So Mrs. Parks popped in and out of the kitchen from the very first day, and, without meddling too much, was of great use. Sometimes she would take Baby Bob into her room for a while; and the little thing soon began to know her, and be willing to leave even Charley's arms to be folded to her motherly bosom.

The thaw that had first exposed the weak side of Willie's boots was followed

by a very heavy rain, which lasted for some days. Mrs. Shepherd was always out at work; but the children were all obliged to stay at home. Willie, poor fellow, was quite lame. On the toe which had been left bare by the fracture in the boot and stocking, came a large chilblain, that prevented his walking. Then, as school was at some distance, Mrs. Shepherd did not think it right to let Maria go out in the wet, for fear the child should take cold and be ill. So Charley had them all on his hands, and he had quite enough to do, I can tell you. Though Willie could not walk, on account of his lame toe, all the rest of his small body was in full strength, and wanted to be in motion too. What mischief he did get into to be sure. And how all the children wished the rain were over, the two head-housekeepers, Charley and Eliza, especially; for they found it such hard work to keep the younger ones in order through the long day, when their mother was absent.

The first morning the sun shone, Maria

went off to school, and Charley said to his mother, "I should think, mother, I might leave the others to-day, and see if I can pick up a penny or two."

This was before they had become so well used to the new lodger, and Mrs. Shepherd told Charley that she thought it better he should stay in, as Willie was not very easy to manage; and he and Eliza never agreed so well as the rest. "Besides," she said, "though it is dry overhead, I think it would hardly be worth while for you to run about much on the chance of earning a penny or two. You must save your boots as much as ever you can, Charley. I should have to work a great many days to earn a pair a-piece for you all round."

Charley was very much disappointed. He had been watching the clouds for days, and hoping for fine weather, that he might have another trial at increasing his small stock of half-pence. In fancy he had seen his money grow until he owned enough to buy, not only his own boots, but pairs for all the rest, mother

included. And now, just when the sun was shining brightly overhead, and the flags were beginning to look white and dry; when even little Maria had trudged off to school in her mended boots, and there was a prospect that Willie would be able to go in a day or two, mother herself came in the way of the fulfilment. He did not think she could really mean it, when *he* was so very anxious to be at work.

"Oh, mother," said he, "surely you don't mean that I must stay in the house to-day. I know Eliza can manage very well without me, if you'll only let her try, and Willie will be quiet, I think."

"I thought you could scarcely keep the peace between Willie and Eliza yesterday, and that you said they never do agree unless you are with them. You must be my head-housekeeper still, Charley, but when the lame toe is quite well, and your little brother at school, you shall try what you can do once more," replied Mrs. Shepherd, who felt sorry to disappoint the boy who was so eager to be of service to her.

Charley ventured to plead that there was Mrs. Parks in the front room, and that she would be sure to keep things all right between Willie and his sister. But still his mother shook her head, and said, "Mrs. Parks has only just come to the house. She seems very kind, to be sure; yet I don't think I ought to let my children trouble her with their complaints or quarrels. Be content, my boy, be content," and Mrs. Shepherd tied on her bonnet as she spoke, and hurried away to her day's work.

For the first time since Charley had been left housekeeper he felt discontented at his post, and wishful to desert it. He still possessed the three-pence—his first earnings—which had made him think himself rich; but now they seemed to have an opposite effect, because the sum was too little to buy one of those pairs of boots so much wanted for his young brother's small feet. And he had set his heart on earning more, yet mother said "Stay at home, instead of going out to try and make money by your

work. Stay at home with your hands idle and your feet resting on the floor, when, weak as those hands are, they have the power to do something; young as the feet are, they can run swiftly and bring what your elders want."

These were not Mrs. Shepherd's exact words; but this was the sense they took in Charley's mind. He thought that his mother did not consider his poor earnings worth having, and therefore would not allow him to go from home.

Charley was wrong. His mother did value very highly all her child's efforts, and his wish to be of use in gaining money also; but she was better able to judge as to what would be best for him to do than he was, and it was the boy's duty to obey, and not to question whether she was right or not. He ought to have trusted to her love—that love which made her toil from early morning till late at night for the sake of her children—to guide him, and not to have been dissatisfied because he

was to help her in the way of her own choosing.

But Charley was cross that morning, really cross, and not at all like the willing boy whose pleasant looks generally made Baby Bob crow with delight, and the other children think lightly of poor meals and scanty fires. He carried baby up and down, but he didn't talk to him and make him laugh as usual. He saw Eliza spread the top of the little round table with the sham cups, saucers, and plates, and prepare quite a wonderful variety of dishes out of a raw carrot, without once saying a word about the shape the bits ought to be. Nay, when Eliza asked him whether the middle dish should be called roast beef or goose, he said he didn't care, for he wasn't going to play at dinners any more.

Eliza was so surprised that she dropped the very prettiest dish in the whole stock and broke it, at which Willie became displeased, as he had himself brought that piece home. He was somewhat comforted,

though, when Eliza showed him that a little rap or two to make the fragments rounder, would turn the broken "*dish*" into two plates.

"But why won't you play at feasts, Charley?" asked Eliza.

"Because they're not good. That other day when I went out we had a real feast, nice beef and bread; and maybe if I had gone into the High-street to-day we might have had more. But mother won't let me help her after all."

Charley cried at the thought of what he could perhaps have done if he might have had his own way; and Baby Bob, on seeing his miserable face, stuck out his own little under lip and made another to match it; so it was hard to tell which of them looked the most doleful. But Charley was too tender-hearted to be cross at Bob, so he kissed his little fat cheek and talked loving nonsense, such as brothers and sisters like to talk to babies, until the "pet lip" was drawn in again and his charge good tempered.

Later in the day, when the pavement was quite dry, little Bob asleep, and every thing seemed to say that Charley could be very well spared from home, he began to think whether, after all, it would be wrong of him to run into the High-street, and try to do a little business on his own account. He said to himself, "If mother saw us just now, I believe she would let me go. She thought Eliza could not get on with Willie, but they have been playing together nicely all the day. I think I may go for half an hour."

So the lad, instead of remembering, that as his mother had told him what to do, he ought to obey, at last persuaded himself that, as he was going out of the house in the hope of serving her, there could be no harm in his disobedience.

Away he ran straight into the High-street, and naturally enough paid his first visit to that side of it on which lived Mr. Harrison, his former employer. The hair-dresser smiled pleasantly and said, "Well,

Charley, how are you to-day? Are you looking out for a job?"

"Yes, Sir," said Charley, thinking he was going to get one.

"I hope you'll meet with somebody who wants a quick lad at an errand, and get well paid for your work. I have nothing to send out to day, and if I had, here is Master Jem at his post for once."

In fact Jem had behaved better since his master had employed and paid Charley, though he did his duty more for the sake of keeping the other boy from being employed than from a wish to do right.

Charley turned away with a heavier heart, and walked slowly along the street. As he was passing the door of a private house, a woman who stood on the step spoke to him. "Little boy," said she, "do you think you can carry a pail of water?"

"I don't know, ma'am," answered he, "but I will try, if you like to let me."

"Our pump is dry, and I want a few pails of water brought from that at the other end of the street. If you can man-

age to carry them I will give you two-pence."

The woman was dressed in an old silk gown, but it was greasy and dirty, and her cap, which had once been smart, had an untidy look. Charley could not help thinking to himself, "How much better my mother looks in her neat dark print gown, even when she has been scrubbing floors in it, than this person does in her fine clothes, which are not fit for her work."

He was quite right in this thought; but when the woman came to the door again, and peeped first one way and then the other, as though she were afraid somebody would see her, before she handed him a heavy wooden pail, he wondered what she was afraid of. "Mother would go herself," thought Charley, "instead of standing waiting while somebody else brought the water." He was a long time dragging the heavy pail along, and before he reached the door he had spilled more than half the water, because he really was not strong enough to lift it properly from the ground.

What a while you have been, and what a drop you have brought," said the woman, in a cross tone. "If you go on at this rate you will be all day bringing half a dozen pailfuls."

She jerked the pail out of Charley's hand in anything but a pleasant manner, and took the water into the house. "Mind you bring more this time," said she, as she handed him the empty vessel, "for if you don't I shall try to get some bigger lad instead of you."

"The pail is so heavy by itself, ma'am," replied Charley, almost afraid to speak. "If you have one that is not quite so large, I can carry it better."

The woman looked up and down the street, as though she were trying to spy out somebody bigger than Charley. But there was no one in sight, so she jerked the large pail out of the boy's hand, and went into the house again, grumbling that boys in general, and Charley in particular, were more trouble than they were worth. Soon she came back to the door with a

large tin can in her hand, which she gave to him saying, "I hope that will suit you, and do make haste. Somebody will be seeing me carry in the water if I have to stand here waiting for you, and I'm not used to such work."

Charley hurried away again to the pump, full of wonder at the idea that his employer should be ashamed of being seen doing any thing which was not wrong, when she was not ashamed of having on a dirty, tawdry dress and untidy cap. His mother always said "*that no right and honest work could disgrace anybody,*" and surely there could be nothing very terrible in having to lift a pail of beautiful clear water. Charley thought that a little more water applied to the woman's face and clothes would have done her good, and, little as he was, he judged rightly in this case.

It was not such very hard work carrying the tin can, and Charley trotted backwards and forwards fast enough to win a smile from the woman as she saw him come quickly up to the door, time after time.

Yet he really thought he must have earned two-pence by his many journeys long before she said to him, as she gave him the empty vessel, "Bring it full once more, and then that will do."

Charley caught sight of the pence in her hand, and the thought of gaining them made him go faster still. He was just turning away from the pump for the last time, when, close by his side, he saw Jem, Mr. Harrison's errand-boy, who spread out his arms to hinder him from passing.

"Don't stop me, Jem," said Charley. "Some one is waiting for this can of water, and I want to make haste."

"Oh, yes, to be sure you do," was the answer. "You always make haste to get a fine character, and try to cheat other boys out of part of their wages; but you won't get any of mine, for all you came sneaking to Mr. Harrison to-day to try. I shall manage to go the errands without your help, thank you all the same."

"I didn't want to cheat you," retorted Charley quite angrily. "If you don't

come back at the right time, and Mr. Harrison gets another boy, that's your fault. Besides, for all he had promised I should go another errand for him that day, I told you that you were wanted. You can't say I didn't behave fair. Now just let me pass, will you?" he continued, "for I must get home again as quick as I can."

Instead of letting Charley pass, the mischievous lad persisted in dancing backwards and forwards, so as continually to hinder him, though without actually touching either the boy or his water-can. Charley got quite out of patience.

He saw the woman looking out for his return, and was afraid that even yet he might lose his two-pence if he tried her patience too far; so he made a rush in order to pass his tormentor and finish his work; but Jem was too nimble for him, and instead of getting clear away, Charley only ran against the other with such violence as to throw both to the ground. The water-can went with a terrible bump on

the edge of the flags, and its contents were all streaming down the street in a moment; and Charley's nose came with a terrible bump, too, upon the can itself, and a stream of a different color began to flow from it.

Jem was not hurt, for he was empty-handed, and better prepared for a shock than Charley, who was thinking more of his load than of himself. He sprang up, therefore, and, when he saw Charley's bleeding nose, he waited to ask no questions as to the hurt, but fairly, or rather very unfairly, took to his heels. With the one hand the poor lad had at liberty, he began to apply his little cotton handkerchief to stop the blood, though he wanted it at the same time to wipe away the tears which streamed down his pale, frightened-looking face. In the other he lifted the now empty can; and, oh! what a new trouble—far worse than even his bruised nose—awaited him. The force of the fall had bent in the side of the can; and when he wanted to fill it with water,

he found his attempt was quite in vain, for there was a little hole at which it all ran out again. How was he to face that woman, who was beckoning him with angry gestures to make haste?

Slowly—far more slowly than when he had the large wooden pail to drag along—did Charley now turn his steps towards the owner of the broken can; and even her attempts to hurry him did not quicken his pace. “Why, how is this?” said she, when he came up at last. “Here is no water in the can. You good-for-nothing little rascal, you have bent in the side, and made a hole into the bargain. You might well come creeping along as you did. I declare you are all alike, you boys. I did think *you* looked a quiet lad; but you’re just one of the same string with the rest, and couldn’t go to the pump a few times without getting to fighting.

The woman spoke very fast and loudly. Though she had seemed afraid of being seen before, she did not now appear to be at all afraid of being heard; for Char-



"I don't please to have my water-pail broken."—P. 107.

ley thought she almost screamed in her anger.

"Please ma'am," he began, in a low and trembling voice, intending to explain matters; but the woman would not listen. "Please!" said she, "but I don't please that you should break my can; so just hold your tongue, and be off with you."

Charley ventured to name the two-pence, and this made the woman more angry still. "Pay, you!" she shrieked; "a likely story indeed: you had better pay *me* for the mischief you have done. If I'd given you six-pence to let the water-fetching alone I should have been money into pocket. You deserve your ears boxed for getting to fighting, and I've a great mind to pay you in that way."

Charley was afraid she really would strike him, she looked so cross; and not daring to say more, he walked away, crying bitterly. He had suffered a great disappointment in not receiving the little wages for which he had certainly worked; and he was also sensible that the woman

had treated him unjustly, because the injury done to the tin can was an accident, for which he was not to blame. Yet Charley's conscience was not quite clear in the business. And why? Ah! what child does not know why he could not help feeling that he had not deserved to succeed in his endeavors that day? *Because he had gone from home contrary to his mother's wish, and been guilty of disobedience.* When he had the hope of taking home some money with him, he kept trying to persuade himself that mother would be so pleased with his earnings that she would forget this disobedience. But Charley was wrong; and now the thought of his fault came upon him with double force. Poor Charley! he was not a person to be envied as he wandered homewards. His shoulder ached with carrying the water; his clothes were wet with what he had spilled by the way. Then his poor little nose was swollen, though it had stopped bleeding; his pockets were very light, for they were quite empty; and

his heart was, oh! so heavy, at the thought that, instead of having been this day a help to his mother, he had disobeyed her, and set a bad example to his brother and sisters, who heard her tell him to stay at home with them.

Charley had been a long while away from Baby Bob, too, and he felt half afraid to go home, lest his absence should have caused still more mischief. Happily for him there was that kind Mrs. Parks sitting with baby on her knee, and he was laughing outright just as Charley lifted the latch; so he was safe, for a comfort.

"Where have you been, Charley?" asked the good woman and the children together. "Baby has been crying," added Eliza. "Yes, Charley," said Mrs. Parks, "Bob was letting them all know who is master when mother's away. He was screaming and crying as if his heart would break, poor dear! and your sister could not get him to be quiet."

"Willie woke him by making a great noise as soon as Charley was gone. And

Charley, he would have your slate; and I tried to get it from him, and it got broken."

Eliza looked rather guilty, and as though she scarcely liked to meet her brother's eye, for she knew that his slate was one of his great treasures. Besides, it would put an end to his summing lessons, unless mother could afford to buy him another, which was not a very probable thing at present, so scarce as money was.

"I doubt, Eliza," said Mrs. Parks, "you have not quite told all. Didn't you reach the slate down first, and then when Willie wanted it you quarrelled, and broke it by struggling: you awoke baby by the noise you both made in the squabble, and I am very glad I was here to make peace, and take poor Bob. These two ought not to be left together without some one else," she added, turning to Charley, and shaking her head at the offenders.

Charley saw it all now;—saw that his mother knew better than he did; saw that he must bend to her wish and obey her, if he really wished to help her. He was very

sorry that his slate was broken; but he was rather glad that it was something belonging to himself, for he thought "*I deserve it.*" He thanked Mrs. Parks for her kindness, said he was very sorry indeed that she had had so much trouble with Bob, and then set to work to get the tea-things out before the absent sister came from school. Very quietly did he move about, and very miserable did he feel at the thought of what he should have to tell his mother. For though Charley had done wrong, he *never dreamed of trying to hide his fault by deceit or falsehood.* He had been brought up to tell the truth, and, however hard it might be to own that he had done wrong, he knew that it would be far, far worse to try to cover the one sin by telling a lie. "Besides," as his mother had often said to him, "it is of no use, because the good God sees all we do, and there is no deceiving Him."

Charley was glad when his mother came, for he wanted to have the load off his mind. She saw that something had gone wrong; but before she had time to ask what, the

lad went to her, and—while his eyes streamed with tears, and his face was raised towards hers with a most imploring look—told her all.

“I am very sorry, Charley, said his mother, “sorry that you are hurt, and that the woman was unkind. But, Charley, you know why I am most grieved.”

Charley's sobs were his only answer. He knew that his mother meant she was most grieved at his disobedience; because, in disobeying her, he had forgotten the command which says, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” She had often repeated these words in the ears of her children; for Mrs. Shepherd, though but a very poor woman now, and never very rich, had always taught her little boys and girls to reverence the Scriptures. She did not let them tumble over the leaves of God's Holy Book, or read it carelessly; but she chose those parts which seemed fittest for their childish minds to understand, and read to them herself. Even in the midst of her poverty and

struggles for bread, she did not neglect this duty. Thus, when the day of rest came, she gathered them around her knees, and taught them as before, and the children were used to reckon it a treat to hear mother read the Bible on the still Sunday evenings in winter.

Mrs. Shepherd did not scold Charley harshly when she found that he had acted contrary to her wishes. Instead of that, she bade him cease crying, bathed his bruised face, attended to the wants of the other children, and, as soon as she had time to sit down, she talked kindly to him about his fault. She made it plain to him, that in obeying his mother he would obey God also, and taught him to think it needful to ask the pardon of his Heavenly Father, as well as of his earthly parent.

"I wanted so much to help you, mother," said Charley.

"Yes, my dear boy, and you wanted to help me in a way of your own choosing. But you must be contented to trust your

mother to show you which will be the best way to help and serve her."

"I will try, mother, for I see which of us is right now."

"And, Charley, let the experience of this day teach you, that the good God must be served in His own way too. It is very natural to us to want to serve God in a different way from that He has bidden us walk in. But that won't do: we must just obey Him, and trust Him for knowing far better than we do. 'Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams.'"



CHAPTER VII.

THE SPRING FESTIVAL.—SELF-DENIAL REWARDED.

IN process of time Willie's toe got well, and, by dint of very hard work and some pinching, the cold days of winter were gone through. But before spring came

Mrs. Shepherd had to leave the house, because the landlord wanted to pull it and some others down, and build larger ones in the place of them. This was a trouble to her, for she had grown accustomed to gruff-spoken Mr. Hopkins, whose deeds were often kinder than his words. After that first call he had more than once popped his head in when Charley was housekeeper, and told him to come to his office if he wanted to earn a penny or two. "I could have given the lad the money," said he to Mrs. Shepherd; "but a well-earned penny goes further than a given one. I like to teach lads the worth of a penny, and to encourage them in the honest independence which makes them ashamed to take what is not fairly earned."

Mr. Hopkins behaved justly to the boy, and always paid him enough for what he did; so that, when his stout figure darkened the window, and Charley, looking up, saw him peeping over the short curtain, he smiled in hope of work which he might do with his mother's leave. And these few

pence of the boy's earning were a good deal to his hard-working parent, and always valued as they deserved to be, for the sake of her child.

It was to Charley that Mr. Hopkins first said he was going to pull the houses down, and that, too, in no very gentle words. "Charley, my man, tell your mother I'm going to pull your house down."

"Oh please, Sir, don't," said he, not knowing what would become of the family.

"But I must, Charley. So tell your mother that she'll have to move her bits of furniture in a fortnight's time. She takes the house by the week; but I shall give her two weeks. What's the lad crying about? There are houses enough in the town beside that one; and I have some more, for that matter. Now you give your mother this bit of paper; it will make her understand about the moving; and say to her that I'm not tired of her for a tenant. I have a house the same size as this, and it will be six-pence a

week less rent, and she must come and talk to me about it."

"Yes, Sir—thank you, Sir," said Charley, brightening up.

The new house was at some distance; but it would not be further for the children to go to school; and it was in a nice open part of the town; only Mrs. Shepherd was afraid Mrs. Parks would leave her. But she did not. The widowed tenant of the front room had become attached to the children and their mother, and quite shared in their cares. She declared she liked the new house better than the old, so they were soon all settled under a fresh roof; yet so like the other was it, that they scarcely noticed the difference.

Well, the spring days came. Kind friends had helped Mrs. Shepherd and her family through the winter. The schoolmaster's wife had often given her employment, and she, and others beside, had bestowed little garments for Charley and the rest of the children. To be sure they had sometimes done with less than

they could have eaten; and their food had always been of the very homeliest sort. But they had never suffered absolute hunger; and when Mrs. Shepherd looked round upon her healthy children, and saw herself still the mistress of a tidy little home, she exclaimed, "Well, it is wonderful how I have pulled through with all these mouths to fill and bodies to clothe. I am sure I couldn't tell anybody how we have managed, only I believe more than ever that 'God helps those that help themselves.'"

"Doesn't He, mother?" said Charley, who rejoiced in the thought that he, too, had been willing to help in his small way, and that God had blessed his efforts.

They were like one in their persevering industrious ways, this mother and child; for adversity had made Charley old before his time, and he entered into all her troubles and joys with his whole heart, just, as she said, "like a grown-up person."

With the bright spring days came a little festival, on which Charley and the other

children always reckoned. When the violets were scenting the hedge-rows, and the primroses carpeting the woods, when the trees were of that brilliant hue which they only wear just after the tender leaves have burst forth, and the song of the birds filled the air with music, all the children belonging to the Sunday-school had a little feast. It was not the regular school anniversary, but a treat provided for them by a lady, who allowed the children to spend a sweet spring day in the woods near her home. The clergyman and the teachers were always very active amongst the little folks that day, helping them to spend it happily, yet showing them that it is quite possible to be merry and wise.

Now Charley Shepherd had been looking forward to this little festival-day with great eagerness. His holidays were very few and far between, and his mother said that, "All being well, he should have this one treat."

"But if you should have to go out to work, mother," said Charley.

"I don't think I shall," she replied; "but if it should happen so, I do believe Mrs. Parks will take care of baby, and all the rest will go with you. Bob is beginning to feel his feet now, and is not so much trouble, bless him! as he used to be when I first had to leave him with you."

Two days before the spring feast—as the children called it—a letter came to Mrs. Parks, and in it the news that her son had arrived in England. She must go to meet him, as he could not leave his ship, and would have to sail again.

"This is a blessing," said Mrs. Parks. "My Harry is safe back, and has had such a good voyage. I thought the ship would come in here, and that would have been pleasant; but I mustn't murmur, for the great thing is to know that he is alive and well."

The minute after she had spoken she was sorry, for she saw tears in Mrs. Shepherd's eyes, as she pressed Baby Bob a little closer to her breast. The poor mother was glad that her lodger had heard

good news; but how could she help thinking of the time when she too was expecting her sailor home, and her children their father; but all in vain. It was sad to feel that the sound of his cheerful voice was not to fall on her ears again; neither were her little ones to run to meet their father.

Just then Baby Bob gave utterance to his first attempt at talking, "Dad, dad," and the mother's eyes overflowed again, as she said, "Oh, baby dear, you will never know your father."

"Yes, in the 'Better Land,' I hope," said cheerful Mrs. Parks, and then she hurried away to prepare for her journey to meet her sailor son.

"No chance for me to go to the spring feast," thought Charley, when he knew that the lodger was going away for several days. He did not say it though. With the self-denying spirit which he had shown before, he kept silent, knowing that his mother would be sorry enough if he were disappointed, without his making any fuss himself. Mrs.

Shepherd, however, felt for all Charley's hopes and fears. She knew that the day's amusement, which it would be a light thing for a grown-up person to miss, would, if lost, be no trifling disappointment to a child. And though a day's wages were of consequence to her, she felt glad when the last evening came, and she had no engagement for the morrow.

"I think I really shall have this one holiday mother," said Charley, joyfully, as eight o'clock struck. And all seemed to promise that such would be the case, in spite of Mrs. Park's absence.

Mrs. Shepherd smiled, and said she thought so too; and she went on ironing Charley's clean white collar, and some other little things for him and the rest of the children to wear. She turned to the fire to take a hot iron from the bar, and at the moment a sharp rap at the door made her start.

"Who is this, I wonder!" she exclaimed; and Charley remained as still as though

he were afraid to open the door. So he was, to tell the truth; for most of the evening visitors at their house came to engage his mother to go out to work.

And such a visitor was this new comer. When the door was opened, a little girl, very much out of breath with running, said, "Oh, please, Mrs. Shepherd, will you come to our house to work to-morrow? The girl has gone away ill, and mother is very poorly herself, and she says you must come, if you can; for she would not like to have a stranger."

Mrs. Shepherd hesitated, and looked at Charley. Certainly, his face did show the disappointment he felt. "Will you go, mother?" he whispered.

Before she could answer, the little girl spoke again: "Mother says she would rather pay you twice as much as usual than not have you come to-morrow, Mrs. Shepherd; so please say 'Yes,' and let me run home again."

"I am not engaged to go anywhere, my dear; but this little boy, my Charley,

wants to go to the spring feast at Woody Knoll to-morrow. He has not had a holiday for a long time; and he has so reckoned upon this, I don't know how I can disappoint him."

"But mother is so poorly, Mrs. Shepherd, and the girl is gone home," pleaded the child again.

A great struggle had been going on in Charley's mind while she spoke. Inclination said to him, "Ask your mother to stay at home. You deserve the holiday, and the spring feast will not occur again for a whole year. Why should you always deny yourself for other people?" But another voice seemed to stay these words, and remind him, that whenever he had denied himself anything for others, he had felt very happy afterwards, and even rejoiced that he had been able to cross his own inclinations. He pictured the sick mother dragging her tired limbs about when she felt unfit for work, and he thought, if it were his own parent, how anxious he should be to persuade some

person else to do it for her, supposing he had money to pay for the hire of any one.

Charley was finding out, that whoever means to follow in the footsteps of Him who was alike the pattern of young and old Christians, must cross his own wishes, not once, but daily.

"Well, what am I to do, my boy?" asked his mother. "I shall leave it to you to say whether I am to go or not."

"Then you are sure not to come, I suppose, Mrs. Shepherd," said the little girl; "Charley will want to go to the feast. I know *I* should, and if my mother let me choose, I could not stay at home."

"You hear that, Charley? Now what do you say?"

A moment's hesitation, a little struggle to choke down something that would not at first let him speak, and then the words, "Mother, I will stay at home and take care of baby."

"Quite sure, Charley?"

"Quite sure, mother;" and this time the

boy spoke up, and looked with a smile at the little girl who was waiting.

"Well, I never did—you are a kind boy," said she. "I did not think you would give up in that way. I am sorry, though, that you must stop at home for your mother to come, and if my mother weren't ill, I should not ask you."

"Tell your mother I will come in the morning," said Mrs. Shepherd.

The child bade both "good night," and soon the sound of her rapid feet was quite lost in the distance.

"Are you sure it will not be too great a disappointment, my boy?" asked Mrs. Shepherd, looking wistfully at her son.

"Mother, I shall be sorry not to go. I can't help feeling a little; but I can bear it; and you'll get twice as much money for your day's work as you mostly do; two whole shillings instead of one."

"I shall not take two shillings, Charley."

The lad opened his eyes wide at this: "Not take it mother! What for?" he inquired.

“Because the lady is ill, and very much in want of help, do you think I ought to take advantage of her trouble? It would be mean to do that, when I have often worked for her, and been as glad of employment as she could be of my services. But I know, Charley, that you would shrink from taking more than your due, and *why should the poor be less particular about being fair and honorable in their dealings than the rich?*”

“I know you are sure to be right, mother; but it would be nice if you could get more money for your work, wouldn't it?”

“I should be very glad, Charley, But I know that in this case the lady would not offer more than the regular price, except as a sort of bribe to me to come, and perhaps, too, she would not think so well of me if I were to take the money. Whether or no, I shall have my proper wages, and nothing extra.”

Maybe Charley thought that his mother was entitled to something extra for going

at a time when she wished to stay at home; but Mrs. Shepherd's rule was to act towards her employers as she would wish them to treat her in turn.

The clothes for the other children were all left ready for them to put on, and Charley could not help heaving a sigh as he saw his own folded and put away, as things that would not be wanted. It was a renewal of the trial when Eliza, Maria, and little Willie went off in such glee to join the other children at the appointed place. It would be a long day for Charley, whose loneliness would make it appear all the more tedious. It is of no use to say that it cost the lad nothing to condemn himself to remain in the house while the rest were away in the sunny woods amongst the bright spring flowers. Nay more; when the door had closed behind the three children, and Charley knew that they were fairly started, the tears, which he had tried so hard to keep down, would have their course. It was a relief to him to cry, unseen and unheard, when his mother could

not know anything about his distress. "There is no harm in crying," he thought to himself. "It isn't that I wish mother had stayed at home, for if she asked me again, I should say the same thing. But it will be pleasant at Woody Knoll to-day, and I feel very dull here with nothing to do but mind baby, and think how the others are enjoying themselves."

It was about noon, and Charley had dried his tears. With the cheerful spirit which was most natural to him, he had resolved to make the best of things, and, as it was so fine, he thought he would take Bob out into the sunshine, and teach him to walk on the smooth, flagged pavement.

He had scarcely got outside when he saw a little girl running towards him, and he thought she looked like the one who had brought the message to his mother the night before. If she was out of breath the first time, she was more so now, and she dropped herself down on the door-step while she held her sides with her hands.

"Oh dear me!" she said, "how fast I have run to be sure. I have made my sides ache with hurrying so, to tell you that you must make haste and get ready to follow all the scholars to Woody Knoll. You will have a nice afternoon yet. I am so glad—and now, little boy, be quick."

"I can't go, you know that," replied Charley, feeling half inclined to wish the little girl had not come to bring to mind again those pleasures which he had been trying so hard to forget. "That would be a funny housekeeper to be left by himself," added he, pointing to Bob, and laughing at the very idea of his deserting baby.

"You're not to leave him, I tell you, but you are to go to the feast for all that."

"But where am I to put him?"

"Get ready, and then I'll tell you," said the little maiden, who was delighted at seeing Charley's puzzled face. But she was forced to explain before he would move, and this was what she told him.

"You know my mother was ill, and you

stayed at home to let your mother come to do the girl's work. That was very kind of you, and I don't believe I could have done it for anybody. I couldn't help thinking about you, how dull you would be here all by yourself, and so I asked mother if she could contrive for you to go to Woody Knoll. She said, 'Yes, if you like to take care of Mrs. Shepherd's little boy, the eldest one can go to the school feast.' Well, I said I would, and so here I am come to tell you to get ready, and you are to bring Bob—you call the baby Bob, don't you? and what a funny short name it is—to our house. I shall play with him, and take care of him all this afternoon, and, if he should get cross, there will be his mother close by."

Bob did not seem much inclined to part with Charley and go to this new volunteer nurse, while his brother washed his hands and face and put on his best clothes to go to the feast. He kicked, and struggled, and slipped off her knee and on to the floor. He could not walk to Charley,

but he could creep, and away he went, on all fours, to his brother, and, clutching at his leg, tried to raise himself upon his feet. The washing and dressing proved rather a long business, in spite of Charley's wish to make it a very speedy one, that he might set out for Woody Knoll.

At last he was ready, and the little girl locked the door while he held Bob, and away they went to her mother's house. She had a good deal to say on the road, for she was a little bit of a chatterbox, and her tongue went almost as fast as the rain patters on a window-pane in stormy weather. Without being asked, she informed Charley that her name was Helena Maria, and that she had two brothers, one called Walter James, and the other Frederick William; that she thought two names better than one, and that "Bob" was a very ugly name, and she should not like to have anybody belonging to her with such a queer, short name. Charley said baby's name was Robert, but they called him "Baby Bob" mostly, because father

used to say so when he was at home, just after the little one was born. Then she asked him a great many questions about his father, which had nearly brought tears into Charley's eyes. But as she did not seem to mind so much about being answered as about being allowed to talk, she soon ran on to another subject, and inquired whether Baby Bob liked to ride in a carriage.

This made Charley fairly burst out laughing. It appeared so very droll to think even of little Bob in a carriage.

"What are you laughing at?" she said. 'Our baby had a nice little carriage, and I could push him along in it myself, and very often did. But he is dead now, poor little fellow! that is why I have a black frock on. His carriage is at home though, and I shall ask my mother to let me put Bob in and give him a ride."

Charley here managed to get in a word, and told the little lady that he only laughed because it seemed so funny for a baby like Bob. "I mean a poor person's baby, you

know Miss," he explained, "to have a carriage to ride in. But I dare say he will like it, though he is not used to such a thing."

At last they arrived at the house. Mrs. Shepherd put Charley's collar straight, gave his hair a smooth-down, and sent him off in high glee to Woody Knoll, where the children were very glad to see him, as there had been many inquiries made about him. A very happy holiday it was to the boy, though only a short one, for he went to it with a clear conscience, feeling that he had left no duty undone, and that he was not enjoying it at the expense of any loss of time or money to his kind, hard-working mother.

Bob's new nurse gained her point, and gave her young charge a famous ride in the little carriage, to his great satisfaction.

Mrs. Shepherd did not take more than her proper wages for a day's work, but the lady for whom she was employed very kindly gave her an old suit which had belonged to one of her own boys, and

which, when cut less and re-made for Charley, would be a very great addition to his wardrobe.



CHAPTER VIII.

SICKNESS AMONGST THE LITTLE ONES.—CHARLEY'S FIRST SITUATION.

A FEW days after the school feast at Woody Knoll, Mrs. Shepherd found, when she came home in the evening, that Charley had scarcely been able to get through the hours unassisted until her return. Baby Bob had cried nearly all the day, and refused his food. "Not as if he was cross, mother," said Charley, "but as if he was in pain, and couldn't help it."

Mrs. Shepherd took the child in her arms, and found that his little hands were very hot, and his skin looked red all over. It was plain enough that poor

Bob was, as Charley had thought, ill, and not cross.

"What do you think it is, mother?" asked Charley, with a grave and anxious face.

"I can't tell; but the measles are stirring in the neighborhood. You have had them long since, and so has Eliza, but the rest haven't. I hope you kept Baby in the house, when you saw he was not well."

"I did, mother," replied Charley.

Mrs. Shepherd was engaged to go out the next day, but seeing that her little one was not in a fit state to be left with such young nurses, however kind they might be, she sent Charley to say that her child was ill, and she must therefore stay at home. The poor woman's thoughts were not of a very cheerful kind while he was absent. All her toiling was only just enough to win bread and the merest necessities of life for her children, and sickness, under such circumstances, was something terrible to think about. "But I must trust in God still," she said to herself. "Many

a time I have wondered how I should get through the trials that were spread before me, and yet help has come at the right time: my little ones have never been in want of food, clothes, or shelter, so far." Yet, though she thus reasoned with herself, Mrs. Shepherd knew that she had only a shilling or two in money, and no stock of food or firing. The wants of her family had always taken all she could possibly earn. She had asked "day by day" for "daily bread," and it had been given. More than this she had never possessed of late. And, if poor Bob should be very ill, and the other children take the measles also, her hands would be tied at home: she could not possibly leave it or them.

Such thoughts as these were depressing for the mother, but harder still for a mere child, who has early learned the lessons which are taught by poverty and constant struggles with the world. As Charley trudged homewards after he had delivered his message, he coned over in his

mind the position in which they would all be placed if there were continued sickness in the house. He made up his mind that now he must do something out of the house to help mother, by working and earning a trifle. "But I shall be able to earn so little," he thought. "I cannot fill up my mother's place."

Mrs. Shepherd saw the sad countenance of her boy, and guessed what cares were filling his mind. "Come, Charley," said she, "you mustn't be cast down. I always look to you to keep me cheerful. Bob will soon be better, I hope, and measles don't last very long, mostly. I shall have to work all the harder when I can go out again."

"But, mother, what shall we do?"

Mrs. Shepherd took the Bible and said, "Let us see what we are told to do here, and who takes care of such as you children and me."

Charley knew what his mother meant, for very often, since that sorrowful day, when they first heard of the loss of the

good ship "Eagle," had Mrs. Shepherd repeated to her children the words which were written for the comfort of people in her condition. And once more, with her baby's feverish cheek resting upon her bosom, and her other children by her side; with but little of this world's goods to call her own, and many wants to supply, she read aloud the passages of Scripture which relate to the fatherless and the widow.

The Lord preserveth the strangers; He relieveth the fatherless and the widow." "The Lord will destroy the house of the proud; but he will establish the border of the widow." "The poor committeth himself unto Thee; Thou art the helper of the fatherless." "A father of the fatherless and a judge of the widows is God in His holy habitation." "In Thee the fatherless findeth mercy."

"But, mother," said Maria, when Mrs. Shepherd stopped reading, "will God give us the things we want, if you are not able to go to work?"

"If a gentleman were to come and pro-

mise that he would send you food and take care of you because you were a poor, fatherless child, you would believe him if he spoke kindly, wouldn't you, children?"

"To be sure we would," was the answer of all the little folks.

"Then, if God has promised to care for the fatherless and the widow, is not that better still? because He never forgets His promises, or says what is not true."

"Yes, it must be better," they said, for they had been taught to believe in the truth and goodness of their Heavenly Father.

And the poor woman found that it was well for her that she had to cheer and comfort her children, since, in striving to make them understand that they were under God's care, it had brought these Bible promises closer to her mind, and made them more real to her own self.

Baby's illness proved to be the measles, and very peevish he was; quite as much as his mother could manage. Charley

found that he could be of no service in doors, so he obtained leave to try his fortune once more in the town.

Somehow his steps tended quite naturally towards the shop of Mr. Harrison, though he could hardly tell why he went thither. Certainly he was not anxious to meet Jem again. He had not forgotten what happened when the mischievous lad was the means of bringing him into trouble with the owner of the tin can. Still, he had earned many a penny in the High-street since then, and it was not far from his old home, and he could just take a peep at that in passing; or rather, he could peep at the place where it once stood, for on the spot which their front parlor occupied was the entrance to a fine new shop, almost finished. Mr. Hopkins was there, too, in the very act of stepping backwards, to look up at the tall buildings of which he was the owner. He spied Charley, and called out more gruffly than ever, "Halloo, boy! you here? Got nothing to do but to come and look at the old spot? Rather

different place this from the little house, with only four rooms under the roof—eh?”

“The old houses were very comfortable, Sir,” replied Charley, who had no small liking for “the house where he was born.”

“‘No place like home.’ That’s what the old song says, and very right too, my lad.”

As Mr. Hopkins spoke, he was feeling first in one pocket and then in another, and reaching to touch the very bottom of each. He was seeking something that could not be found. “I’ve done it this time. Left my pocket-book at home,” he muttered. “How provoking!”

“May I fetch it for you, Sir?”

Mr. Hopkins laughed as loudly as he generally spoke.

“I never saw such a lad in all my life as you are, Charley. You’ll never let a chance of running an errand slip past you. It does seem such a joke, though, to send a bit of a lad like you for my pocket-book.”

"Is it heavy, Sir?" asked Charley simply; for he didn't very well know what a pocket-book was. He thought it was any book that could be put into a pocket.

"Heavy? Yes—that is—No. It's easy enough to carry."

"Then let me fetch it, Sir. I'll bring it safe for you."

"And not let anybody peep inside, or look into it yourself? There now, you needn't turn so red in the face: you shall fetch it."

Mr. Hopkins wrote a line with a lead pencil on a scrap of paper, and sent Charley with it to his house, bidding him make haste back. The boy needed not to be told a second time, but was off like the wind. He liked to run for the loud-voiced landlord, and he soon returned with the pocket-book, which he had been careful to keep out of sight underneath his jacket.

Mr. Hopkins took out a small paper, and told Charley to look at it, and then follow him. They went into the Bank, and there Charley saw more money than had ever be-

fore astonished his eyes. And what seemed the funniest part of the sight, the gentleman who was behind the counter actually took a shovelful of bright sovereigns out of a sort of drawer, and gave Mr. Hopkins a great many of them, and some bank-notes too, in exchange for that one paper which he had carried in the pocket-book.

"You didn't think that pocket-book would hold so much money, did you, Charley?" asked the landlord. "It isn't everybody that would trust a little lad like you to carry a paper worth two hundred pounds. But then you did not know the value."

"If I had, it would have been all the same to me, Sir," replied Charley, "only I should have felt afraid of losing it."

"I believe you, my lad, and I shall give you six-pence instead of two-pence this time."

Charley was very thankful for such liberal wages, and having inquired whether he could do anything more for the money, and being told, "No, thank you, Charley,"

he started in quest of another job. "It would," he thought, "be a wonderful stroke of good fortune if he were to earn as much more. That would be helping mother."

In the High-street, he saw Mr. Harrison looking out at his shop-door, and he made up his mind to pass that way. The hairdresser noticed his young acquaintance.

"You are the very man I want," said he, "that is, if you are not in a hurry. Jem left me yesterday, and here are several parcels to carry out. I was just looking for some one to take them. Can you go?"

Of course he was very glad indeed to go, and when all the parcels were delivered, Mr. Harrison gave him four-pence and a piece of bread and cheese. It was nearly tea-time before Charley had finished work, and he was very tired and hungry. In fact, he had been running about almost ever since breakfast.

However, it really was a grand thing to

have wages in silver—six-pence and a four-penny-bit—to take home with him. He thought, too, that it was not unlikely Mr. Harrison would want him again, as he was without an errand boy. He ventured to ask if he might call on the next day.

“Well, yes, my lad, you may. I am on the look-out for another boy, but I have not engaged one yet, or even heard of anybody likely to suit me. If you were a little larger, and not wanted at home, I should talk to your mother about your taking Jem’s place.”

“I will be sure and come in the morning, Sir,” answered Charley; and all the way home he was wondering whether he could be done without, and go to earn regular wages as Mr. Harrison’s errand boy. He was not a little proud and pleased when he laid his two silver pieces on the table, and heard his mother say, “Charley, you really have done wonders. I don’t know what I should do if I had not my good little son. But how hungry you must be! Have you had any dinner?”

"I didn't get any at dinner time, mother, but Mr. Harrison gave me a piece of bread and cheese when I was leaving, and I have eaten half of it."

"Why didn't you eat it all, child? I'm sure you must have wanted it."

"*They* hardly ever taste cheese, mother, so I thought they should to-night." "*They*" meant the other children, as his mother very well knew.

"But you might have eaten all the bread, Charley. There is more in the pantry, thank God. You are always thinking about other people and forgetting yourself."

Charley laughed. "Well, it was silly of me not to eat the bread; but I forgot that our bread would just do the same as this along with the cheese. How is Bob?"

"He has caught the measles, sure enough; for his dear little face is all over spots; but I hope he'll get well again soon. I shall have to be nurse this week at any rate, if even none of the others catch the illness from him.

And now, Charley, you must have your tea. I hear Maria and Willie at the door, and Eliza is just coming from the shop with the sugar I sent her to buy."

Mrs. Shepherd had saved Charley a scrap of bacon from the little bit cooked for dinner, and the lad brought a fine appetite in with him. He brought, too, what was even better, a cheerful and contented spirit.

"I've been thinking, mother," he said, "what a difference there is between this day's work and that other day when I went out, after you had told me not."

"Aye, child, there is. You went out to-day, and your mother's prayers went with you. And no doubt the good God hears such prayers, and answers them by bestowing a blessing on the work of an obedient, dutiful son, who honors his parents by his deeds as well as by his words."

When Charley had a chance of speaking about Mr. Harrison's place, unheard by the rest, he did so, and repeated the hair-

dresser's words. "Don't you think Eliza could take care of Bob without me now, mother?" he asked. "Mrs. Parks will be back on the day after to-morrow, and you will stay at home yourself till he is well again. I didn't say a word to Mr. Harrison, for fear you shouldn't be pleased. Will you talk to him? He wants a larger boy; but I believe he would try me."

Mrs. Shepherd was pleased that the lad had not spoken without asking her leave, and she, too, thought it would be possible to spare him from home. She had that day seen Mrs. Fuller, the wife of Charley's friend, the kind schoolmaster, and she had offered her some work that could be done at home, and which would employ her nearly half the week. Mr. Fuller's promise to serve Mrs. Shepherd had never been forgotten. He and his wife had often talked over the poor woman's position, and they had shown her little kindnesses, beside teaching her children free of charge. They greatly pitied her on account of the

anxiety she must feel at having to leave her children, day after day, and they pitied the children also for being deprived of her presence. And now, at the first opportunity, they had obtained her work, which would enable her to spend three days in each week under the same roof with her little ones.

This was good news for Charley. Every thing promised well for the fulfilment of his wish; and finally, after some talk, it was settled that he should ask Mr. Harrison whether he would give him a trial, and see if he were strong enough to take the place Jem had left.

We may be sure Charley did not lose any time in putting the question, for fear some other boy should step in before him. Mr. Harrison told him there was no doubt about his being strong enough, as, in his business, there were no large parcels to carry out. "I meant to engage an older boy, though, Charley," he continued, "more on account of steadiness than strength. I want a boy that I can depend upon to be

civil and quiet when my back is turned. Besides, he must come back quickly, when he is sent on an errand—that I think you can do—and be strictly honest.”

“I never did take anything that wasn’t my own,” said Charley, in an earnest tone. “Mother always taught us to be honest, Sir.”

“I dare say, but mothers may teach, yet they cannot get their children to do all they wish them to practise. Jem has a good mother, yet she, poor woman, has an idle, mischievous, and dishonest son, who grieves her every day of his life.”

Charley was silent, not knowing very well what to say next. The truth was that Mr. Harrison had been very unfortunate in two or three errand-boys, one after another, and was beginning to think that all were alike. He knew that Charley had served him very well on both occasions when he employed him, and that people said he was a good lad to his mother. Still Mr. Harrison was not much more inclined to trust him on these accounts. “They all do

pretty well for a time or two, or for a few days, and then grow idle and good for nothing," he said to himself.

However, somebody he must have, and for the same reason that he considered no boy really to be trusted, he thought he might as well try Charley as any other lad. He therefore asked him where his home was, and promised to call and talk to Mrs. Shepherd that evening.

He did so, and a bargain was struck. Charley was to go to the shop at eight every morning, but to get his breakfast at home before he started. At twelve he was to come home again to dinner, and at five to tea. On Saturday night he would be late, Mr. Harrison said; but on other evenings he would leave at eight o'clock. His wages were to be two shillings a week; but after the first month, if he were a good lad, his new master promised to give him half-a-crown.

Mr. Harrison did not say that his last boy, the faithless Jem, had received three shillings a week, but such was the case.

However, neither Charley nor his mother found fault with what was offered, for, though not a great sum, two shillings certain every Saturday night would be of considerable service to the family, and no trifling addition to its income.

“And see if I don’t be a good lad and get half-a-crown a-week at the month’s end, mother,” said Charley, when Mr. Harrison was gone.

“Try to deserve it, Charley, and be sure you always do the same, whether your master is looking or not. You know who can always see you. And, my boy, though we want money to buy food and clothes with, and every penny that is honestly earned is of use, don’t think too much about the wages. Remember you are working for another Master who is in Heaven. He can and will give you a better reward, if you do what is right, than all the money in the world would be.”

Many words of caution and advice did Mrs. Shepherd say to her little son; and, last of all, she knelt by his side, and asked

God to keep him honest, truthful, faithful, worthy to be called "a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven."

With his mother's prayer still in a manner sounding in his ears, and her advice still speaking to his heart, Charley went to his first regular situation.

And Mrs. Shepherd was exceedingly glad that he had obtained one. She was compelled to try to make her children of use; but she dreaded lest Charley might be led into temptation, or meet with evil companions, if she allowed him to go into the streets to seek employment.

This place she thought would gratify the boy's desire to help her, and afford him certain, if small, wages. It was something more to be thankful for.

CHAPTER IX.

CHARLEY FINDS OUT THE BLESSING OF THE LORD'S DAY, AND KEEPS OUT OF MR. HARRISON'S TRAP.

MRS. SHEPHERD had rather longer to stay at home than she calculated upon; for when Bob began to get better, Willie and Maria took the measles, and required nursing; so that Charley's earnings were quite an important sum to his mother when he brought them in very late on the first Saturday night. "Too late for such a little fellow to be up," thought she, when she saw how pale his cheeks were, and how hard he found it to keep his eyes open. Indeed, before his mother could get the water for him to be washed in, the weary lad had dropped asleep as he sat on the rocking-chair.

The mother sighed as she awoke him, and said, "Come, Charley, and have a good washing before you go to bed; you don't know how it will refresh you."

The boy jumped up and rubbed his eyes.

"I am such a sleepy fellow, mother," he cried. "You see I've not got used to sitting up at nights, because I've always gone to bed in good time. I was half afraid, too, to come through the streets so late; but no person meddled with me."

"God will take care of you, my child," said Mrs. Shepherd, "both by night and by day, if you ask Him."

She did not tell Charley that she herself had been full of fears for his safety; and that, as it grew late, she could not rest in the house for thinking that perhaps some harm would befall her boy. Fortunately, her lodger was once more settled in the front room, after a happy meeting with her sailor son, who had started on another voyage. To Mrs. Parks she told her anxieties; and the good woman at once said, "If you like to go to meet Charley, I will take care of all at home while you are away."

Only too glad of the chance, Mrs. Shepherd slipped on her bonnet and shawl, and hurried to Mr. Harrison's shop, in which

she saw Charley, all right, and very busy. Not contented to leave him, she waited until closing time came; and, unseen by the boy, followed him at a little distance, until very near home. Then she hurried past him, and by the time he lifted the latch she had taken off her bonnet; so that Charley never knew that his mother's love had brought her all the way to his master's shop, in order that she might guard him on his return.

"I wouldn't tell him," said she to Mrs. Parks, "for fear it should make him timid. If he knew that I had felt so uneasy, he might be afraid to come home another time; but I was watching over him all the same as though he did know, and I'm very much obliged to you for minding the house and the children. I'm ashamed to think how I've kept you up for my convenience."

"Now please don't say a single word about it," was the kind reply. "I have a lad of my own, a great strapping fellow—I wish you could see him—and a good

son; and I ought to know what mothers feel about their young ones."

Aye! children little understand with what earnest care Christian parents strive to watch over them, and shield them from harm. Still less do they remember, that whether earthly parents are near them or not, their Heavenly Father is ever ready to encircle them with His protecting arm.

On the Sunday morning Charley had no shop to think about, and very glad he was of the day of rest. "Oh, mother," he said, "what a good thing it is that there is a Sunday in each week. What should we do without it?"

"I have often thought that, Charley; and I do believe that it is only the weary workers, who have to toil very hard for their daily bread, that understand what a comfort the Lord's day is, both to the soul and body. Thank God for having hallowed one day in seven."

Charley's heart echoed his mother's thanksgiving, for he had found out what a precious gift is the Day of Rest.

Amongst the little errand-boy's duties was that of sweeping out the shop in the morning, and, during the second week of his stay at Mr. Harrison's, he observed something bright lying on the floor. His master was not there; he was standing outside, speaking to another tradesman. As Charley stooped to pick up what had attracted his attention, he found it was a shilling, and not, as he had at first thought, a bit of lead-foil torn off the top of a bottle. Charley had seen such bits of lead more than once, and it was only quite by chance that he stooped to pick up the shilling. If it had not been that he was in the habit of taking these morsels of bright metal home to please his sisters with—they made very smart plates out of them by the help of a pair of scissors—the shilling would have been, most likely, swept out amongst the dust. Charley laid the shilling down upon the counter until his master was at liberty; and when Mr. Harrison came into the shop, he said, "I found this shilling upon the floor, Sir, while I was sweeping."

He handed the money to the master, and turning away, resumed his work. "Good boy, Charles: I am much obliged to you; the shilling is mine," said Mr. Harrison. "So you don't think a thing belongs to you because you find it."

"No, Sir," replied Charley, looking surprised at the very idea of such a thing. "Mother always taught me different from that. She says if I find anything, I must do my best to find out the owner too."

"Mind what she says to you, Charles; and don't be like that good-for-nothing Jem, who made his mother miserable. He seemed a different lad when I first got him; and I thought well of him for three months, or more: then I found out that he was not honest, or truthful either."

Mr. Harrison went into a little room which he had at the back of the shop. It was there that ladies had their hair cut; and there was a scarlet curtain drawn across the glass door between the two places. He closed the door, leaving Charley now busy dusting the shelves, boxes,

and other things lying upon them. The boy was not aware that Mr. Harrison had drawn the curtain a little, on purpose to watch his movements. Yet if he had known it, he could not have gone more steadily about his work, whistling a tune as he plied his duster; for at that early hour no customers were in the shop. He looked cheerful, and he felt so; for the children were getting well again, and his mother had always plenty of work, some of which paid her better than her earlier earnings used to do; so he had cause to to be glad.

“He appears a very honest lad,” thought Mr. Harrison: “I hope he will not disappoint me. I remember when Jem brought me a shilling that he had picked up off the floor, he stood waiting, after he gave it to me, as though he quite expected I should bestow the half of it upon him for his trouble. Now this lad seemed to bring me the money as a mere matter of business, or rather duty, and to dream of no reward for having done what was right. I shall reward

him for his honesty, though I shall not tell him that I am going to do him a little kindness because he gave me the shilling. If I did, he might wait for it, as Jem did, another time."

Mr. Harrison did not give Charley money; but that day he very kindly said to him, "You need not go home to dinner this morning, Charles, I will give you some meat and bread, and a good piece of apple pie instead, and tell your mother that I shall do the same always on a Saturday. You have a long way to walk, and are kept up late at night. I can't help your being late, but I can save you some steps."

Charley's face beamed with pleasure, though he could not understand how it was Mr. Harrison should make such an offer without being asked to do it. He thanked him again and again, and said, artlessly, "I was thinking I should go without either my dinner or my tea next Saturday, Sir, because I was so very tired last Saturday with not being used to be out of bed after nine o'clock, and with having so far to walk."

"Why, then, I have guessed the very thing to suit you, Charles;" and the hair-dresser handed the lad food for a much more substantial meal than he was generally in the habit of receiving at dinner-time.

Charley told his mother about the shilling he had found in the morning. "And wasn't it lucky," said he, "that I had always picked up the bits of lead? If I had swept them away I might never have noticed the shilling at all. Then that would have been lost."

"Very lucky, Charley. You gave the shilling to your master, of course?"

"To be sure I did, mother."

"That was right." No more was said, and in the course of a few minutes neither mother nor son thought any further about the shilling for that time.

This was not, however, the only money that Charley found and gave to his master. Two more shillings, a six-pence, and once even a half-sovereign, were discovered by him in various parts of the shop and ad-

joining room. He was set to clear out a large box full of papers and rubbish, odds and ends of all kinds, that had been thrust into it out of the way. Nearly at the bottom of this he picked out a sixpence quite tarnished with lying unused, and after that his sharp eyes detected the edge of a little threepenny piece sticking above a crevice in the floor. But none of these tempted Charley; or at least, if they tempted him, he did not yield to temptation. The tarnished sixpence, which looked as though it had lain for years amongst the lumber, and the little threepenny piece, which he might have thought would never be missed, were both taken, in turn, to his master, the same as the half-sovereign and other coins had been before. They were not Charley's property. That thought was enough for him, and he never forgot that God would know if he kept one farthing which was not rightly his own.

All this money Charley found on different days during the first month he was at Mr. Harrison's. As was natural, he told

his mother, who simply said he had done right to restore them to his master. In her approbation, and that of his own conscience, was the boy's reward; for though the hairdresser was very kind to him, he never gave the lad a penny in the way of a direct recompense for his honesty. One thing the boy said to his mother respecting the money, which made her look very thoughtful. It was this: "I can't help thinking, mother, that if Mr. Harrison was ever in want of money, and didn't know where to get a shilling, like you sometimes, he would never lose it, as he often does. Or, if he did lose it, he would look for it till it was found again. But I suppose he makes himself sure that I shall find it if he doesn't, and that comes to the same thing."

Mr. Harrison made a second call at Mrs. Shepherd's house at the end of a month, in order to tell her, that being quite satisfied with Charley's conduct, he was willing to give him another sixpence per week, and therefore on the next Saturday night he

would receive half-a-crown instead of two shillings. Charley was not at home when his master came. He had gone with a message to Mr. Fuller, and his old teacher, who still took a great interest in the boy, kept him for half-an-hour, in order to talk with and advise him a little.

Mrs. Shepherd was glad that the lad happened to be absent. She was anxious to speak about something that troubled her mind with respect to Charley's position at Mr. Harrison's. Yet she scarcely knew how to begin, after the kind manner in which he had praised her son's conduct. Fortunately she was saved the trouble by another remark which her visitor made respecting Charley's honesty.

"I told you, Mrs. Shepherd," said he, "that I had been very much troubled by the dishonesty of several errand-boys, one after the other, and had lost both money and goods in consequence. Now I believe your boy is thoroughly honest, and am convinced he would not wrong me out of a penny."

"That is good news, Sir, though to be sure it is only what I thought of him before. But nobody could feel quite so willing to trust and think well of him as his mother. Though I say it, my Charley is an upright, truthful boy, and a good son."

Mr. Harrison saw the tears glistening in her eyes as she spoke, and being desirous of adding to the feeling which caused the moisture to gather there, replied, "Yes, Mrs. Shepherd, I can assure you that I have tried him more severely than I ever tried a lad before, and yet nothing made any difference."

The mother put down her work and looked straight at her visitor. "Mr. Harrison," she said, calmly but very gravely, "do you mean to say that you have tempted my boy to be dishonest, that you might prove him—that is, if the poor thing had strength given him to stand and withstand—honest? I have thought it very strange that Charley should so often find money about your premises; yet I could hardly think that you had placed these shillings,

and even gold, to tempt a child to steal. Is it so, Sir?"

She waited for an answer, which Mr. Harrison seemed at a loss to give. He hesitated, stammered, and at last said, "Come, come, Mrs. Shepherd, you use harsh and hard words. I told you, long since, that I had been robbed so often that I was afraid to bring another boy into my premises, and I think there could be no harm in testing your son's honesty before I agreed to advance his wages and retain him in his place. I did lay the money that he found at various times in the places whence he took it, and, by doing so, I have proved that Charley is deserving of my confidence. I have great pleasure in saying it, and I mean to try to be his friend. I think, so far, you have had no reason to complain, and I can answer for it you will never find me worse than my word in my dealings with a boy who does his duty."

"I am not ungrateful, Sir," replied Mrs. Shepherd. "You have been kind to my

lad in giving him many a meal of better food than he had at home. He always talks of you as one of the best masters; but yet I shall not feel satisfied to send him back to you after what you have told me."

"Not send him back! But I suppose it is the old story. You find out that the boy is useful to me, so you will threaten to take him away, that I may make a further advance in his wages. That, however, I shall not do at present."

Mrs. Shepherd felt the injustice of this speech, but she did not get angry. She only answered, "You do not know me, Sir, or you would not say that. I am quite satisfied with the wages. I should not have found fault if he were not to have more than two shillings a week still, for you more than make up the rest in food. But, Mr. Harrison, was it right to lay temptation in my child's way? You knew that he was a fatherless boy, and that his mother was poor, working hard to get bread to fill five young mouths, and

often short, in spite of all her labours. Was it right to put that money in the way on purpose to remind the lad—as one may say—what the shilling would buy, or how many of our little wants might be supplied by that half-sovereign? Oh, Mr. Harrison, do you say the prayer, ‘Lead us not into temptation,’ and yet put it in the way of a weak child? I am thankful, more thankful than I can tell you, Sir, that he had grace given him to do what was right; but he has not you to thank for that, though you have behaved well to him in other respects. Besides, if it had happened that Charley had not seen the money at all—for he might have thrown it away amongst the papers, or swept it out with the dust—the innocent lad would have been blamed as a thief, and classed with those who robbed you before. Perhaps, poor things! they were first tempted by your bait, who knows?”

Mr. Harrison made no attempt to interrupt the speaker, though her words impressed him very deeply. When she had

finished, he said, "I am not offended with you, Mrs. Shepherd, though you certainly cut deeply. So far from it, I am much obliged to you for a lesson I shall not soon forget. I never looked on that side of the question before: I only thought of convincing myself whether the lads were honest or not, and I may have been the means of leading them into temptation, as you say. However, I am not above owning that I committed a great mistake, and I promise you that I will never again expose Charles to any needless trial, if you choose to let him remain with me."

"Thank you, Sir. In that case I shall be quite willing; and though, as his mother, I felt I must speak, I don't forget all the other kindnesses he has received from you. You have no little folks of your own, Sir, or you would excuse a mother, who speaks rather in earnest where a child's good is concerned. And if you only look at the thing, Sir! Now just notice how plain and homely everything is in the house."

“Everything very neat and comfortable, and beautifully clean.”

There was a look of natural pride on Mrs. Shepherd's face, as she heard this well-deserved compliment, and she answered, “Thank you again, Mr. Harrison. I think I may say I try to make the best of what we have; but how many pretty little nicknacks you have in your shop. And don't you think that if a lad meant to be dishonest, he would find it hard enough to keep his hands off such like things, without your trying him with money too?”

“True, Mrs. Shepherd; but I really did not think about it in this light. I shall go home a wiser man than I came.”

“I have not named the matter to Charley, Sir, and I suppose you will agree with me, that it will be best kept to ourselves.”

Mr. Harrison nodded assent, and just at the moment the latch was raised, and Charley entered in time to thank his master for the promised advance of wages, and to be told that he had given satisfaction, not

only in the shop, but also by his civility to those customers to whose houses he had been sent.



CHAPTER X.

DID CHARLEY GO APPRENTICE TO LEARN TO BE A
BARBER, I WONDER?

IN the same spirit with which he worked for his mother, Charley tried to serve his master also. What a little man of business he looked when in the shop! Always very neat and clean, after the sweeping and dusting were done in the morning, he put on a little white apron, and assisted in waiting on the customers. Some boys think to themselves, "I need not do this, or that, for I shall not get any more wages if I do," and so try for how little work they can obtain their money. But it was not Charley's fashion to act in this manner. Every day he tried to do and to know

something more than he did on the preceding one, and it was his study not merely to get through the time in the easiest possible way to himself, but to be of the greatest real use to his master. In fact, he was more like an apprentice than a mere errand-boy; and Mr. Harrison said it was surprising what a knowledge of the business he was picking up.

Poor Charley! The first time he was set to cover the chin of a customer with the soft lather, ready for his master to shave, as soon as he had finished the one about which he was already engaged, he trembled. It seemed, as he said to his mother afterwards, such a liberty to take with a grown-up man: and he almost felt as though he should deserve to be knocked backwards for doing it. But he soon became used to that part of the business, and plied the brush rapidly, especially on Saturday evenings. Once only did he make any mistake, and that was when it was just about closing time, and he was very, very sleepy. He had taken off his little apron,

and was going home, but was stopped by the entrance of two burly working-men, who wanted shaving. Charley began his part of the work, hardly knowing what he was about, and managed to poke the brush into the first man's eye. The man started up with an angry exclamation, but the other, who noticed Charley's weary face, said, "Don't be cross, mate: the poor little lad's nearly asleep. We should have come sooner by rights, but working-men can't always choose their time, and our work lies in a cake-mill that isn't stopped till eleven on Saturday night."

"And we must have a scrape to make us a bit tidy-like for Sunday," added his companion, who had quite recovered his good-temper, and could laugh again at Charley's awkward blunder.

More than once after that the burly workmen liked to fling a joke at Charley, and asked him if he were wide awake; for if not, he must shut his own eyes too."

Mr. Harrison's trust in Charley constantly increased. Often he would leave

him in charge of the shop for an hour or two during the least busy time, and he even took pains to teach him where the various articles were kept, and the prices of them, so that he could serve any chance customer that might come during his own absence. Charley also once operated on the locks of a couple of men who came when his master was away.

Very rough-looking customers they were, with plenty of hair nearly all over their faces, as well as on their heads.

"Now, my lively lad," said one of them, "we want our hair cut. Be sharp, and do mine first, for I'm in the biggest hurry."

"If you please, Sir, master's out; but he'll be here in half-an-hour, and then he'll cut your hair," replied Charley.

"Might as well be a week. But why can't you do it? The master hasn't taken all the scissors along with him, I reckon."

"No, Sir, here are scissors enough; but, please, I never did cut anybody's hair in my life."

"Well, I reckon you'll have to start along

with somebody's, so begin with mine. I say, Jack," he added, turning to his companion, "I don't think he'll spoil our beautiful heads of hair. What do you think?"

The other answered with a loud laugh, but expressed his wish to come second, on account of the practice Charley would have on his friend's head. Both seemed to think it rather a good piece of fun that Charley should be at all backward about trying his hand on their locks. It was no easy task to reduce them to order, for the customers plainly did not spend much time on that part of their persons, the hair being very rough and shaggy. However, the man who was looking on, occasionally advised Charley "to cut that piece right off," when a lock resisted the lad's efforts to disentangle it; and he was continually requested to shear off "a good threepennyworth." It was no wonder that the lad grew quite fearless in snipping, when he found out that the main object of his customers was to get as much cutting as possible done for the money, in order that it might be longer before it needed doing again.

The business was at length completed, and the men departed, after surveying themselves in the glass with no little satisfaction. One of them even said, "I say, little'un, if you're here when I come next time, you shall cut my hair instead of the master. You give most work for the money."

Mr. Harrison was both surprised and amused when his errand-boy gave him the money, and told him how he got it. Though Charley was a good, quiet sort of a lad, he liked a bit of fun; and he described his first attempt at hair-cutting to his master in a way that made the latter laugh most heartily, while the boy's own usually sober-looking face was brimful of mirth.

"Here, Charley," said Mr. Harrison, when he could at last cease from laughing, "take back the sixpence. You shall have your first earnings at hair-cutting. Besides, the fun of hearing you tell about it is worth that; so you are doubly welcome to the money."

That same evening, when Charley went home, he thought he would further improve himself in the new branch of business. He had heard his mother say that the children's hair wanted cutting. She had not come home, so he resolved to give her a surprise. Calling Eliza, he mounted her on a stool, tucked an apron under her chin, and, rather against her will, be it known, reduced her quantity of hair by nearly one-half. Partly by threats, partly by the gift of a halfpenny each, he did the same by Maria's and Willie's, and, finally, he operated upon Baby Bob's bits of curls, though very tenderly in this last case. The other children all protested against Bob's dear little curls being touched; but Charley silenced them by repeating what he had heard Mr. Harrison say to his customers, namely, that cutting made the hair grow, all the better afterwards.

Charley had been too much taken up by his occupation to notice that there were more lookers-on than he was aware of; but a very loud laugh made him glance at

the window, and there was the landlord at his old trick of peeping over the blind. "Well done, Charley," he called out; "you are cut out for a hairdresser: but does your mother know that you have set up in business?"

He did not wait for an answer, but passed on, nodding to Mrs. Shepherd, who had her hand on the latch. The first thing she did on entering was to snatch up dear little Bob, pull the apron off his neck, and console him for the loss of his sprouting curls by a shower of motherly kisses, while she was tempted to scold Charley for his operations, completed during her absence.

Charley found out that for once his zeal in business matters had carried him a trifle too far, and he had to beg pardon for having tried his skill, without leave, on the locks of his brothers and sisters. Perhaps, if he had known what a laugh his mother and Mrs. Parks had afterwards, when they examined Charley's handiwork, and the story of his morning's hair-cutting was repeated by the former, to whom he had

told it when he displayed the sixpence, he would not have thought that his fault was reckoned a very grave one by either of these kindly matrons.

There were other shopkeepers in the High-street to whom "Harrison's boy," as Charley was called amongst them, became known, and one of these, a draper in a large way of business, would have enticed him to leave his first master by offering him more wages. Mrs. Shepherd sometimes went to the shop to purchase materials for her own and her children's clothes, and, to her astonishment, the draper offered to take Charley. "I want an errand-boy," said he, "and I should say your lad does not get so much as I give, where he is now."

"He gets half-a-crown a week, Sir, and Mr. Harrison is very kind to him in many ways beside; so he is not wanting a place at present, thank you."

"Only half-a-crown! Now I would give such a boy three and sixpence; and an extra shilling a week would be worth having, I should think."

"If Charley wanted a place, Sir, we should be very glad to engage with you; but I could not take him from Mr. Harrison, who paid him the first penny he ever earned, and who is a good master."

Mrs. Shepherd did not tell her boy about the draper's offer, but he told her that shortly afterwards a similar one had been made to him. "But, mother," said he, "I think I ought to stay in a good place when I have one, and a kind master, too. Besides, they say that boys are well thought of that stay in their places for a good while."

Whether Mr. Harrison had an idea that his neighbor wanted to take away his trusty little errand-boy Charley never knew, but, the very next week, he, of his own accord, raised his weekly wages to three shillings, and began to think it might be well to take him as an apprentice.

And did our hero go to be a barber?

I shall answer that question in my next chapter; the last I mean to write about Charley Shepherd; and it will be very short, like the one I am finishing now.

CHAPTER XI.

CHRISTMAS EVE!—CHRISTMAS VISITORS!—CHRISTMAS
THANKSGIVINGS!

MR. HARRISON mentioned his wish to take Charley as an apprentice, but, to his surprise, found that neither the boy nor his mother was willing. Yet both promised that Charley should not go from him to any other master; so he was fain to be content, though he would have liked to bind the boy fast for a term of years.

Summer succeeded spring; then the autumn winds swept the leaves from the trees, and people began to say to each other, "Christmas will soon be here again. How fast the time flies." Charley was still doing his duty in right manful fashion to his master, and the other children were daily growing in strength and stature, while their mother toiled also as of old. Bob—scarcely Baby Bob now—could trot sturdily round the kitchen, and his little fingers were always in mischief, for, child

like, he wanted to have, examine, or perhaps break, everything he could get hold of.

And Mrs. Parks still occupied the front room, and rejoiced over letters from her absent sailor son, especially that last one, in which were the words, "God willing, dear mother, I shall be home at Christmas, and this time I shall come to you, instead of your coming to meet me."

"I'm almost afraid to tell you of my good news," said Mrs. Parks to her landlady after she had read this letter.

"You are expecting your son home, I suppose," replied her listener. "Well, I'm sure I shall rejoice with you when he does come. I have had my own great trouble"——here she paused, for the remembrance of last winter, when she too was hoping to welcome her sailor husband, was too much for her. "God keep you from such a trial," said she, when she was able to speak; "and don't you think, because I have suffered, that I am so selfish that I can't be glad for your sake. And it is a good thing that

you can expect your son here. It would have been toilsome for you to travel to a distant seaport in the winter."

"He has not spent a Christmas in England these six years," returned Mrs. Parks. "It will be a treat if he is spared to reach here in safety, and he is reckoning on Christmas at home. He says it makes him feel like a boy again when he thinks of the churches decked out with holly; for in the place where he was born my lad was always one who helped to twine the evergreens around the pillars, and wreath it across the old grey arches. He was such a fellow to climb, being as active as a cat. Not so quiet as your Charley, but a rare good son for all that."

Mrs. Parks put her spectacles on the table, and her thoughts went back to the days when her son was really a boy; and then again they travelled onward, till she fancied the sunburnt man was before her eyes. Too soon yet, good Mrs. Parks. December is but just begun, and it wants three weeks to Christmas.

And Mrs. Shepherd and her children had their thoughts. Last year they believed that "father" would be home by Christmas, and, that hope being disappointed, had said he must arrive by New Year. Yet how had it been with them? "Pray God," murmured the mother to herself again, "that my friend may not experience such a bitter waiting and watching, all in vain, as I and mine have done."

Mrs. Shepherd sorrowed still, but not as one without hope. In looking back upon the time which had passed since she first began to toil for her children's bread, she found abundant cause for thankfulness. God had raised her up friends, had supplied her needs, given her strength to work, and taught her lessons of submission and faith. In her children she had great comfort. Yes, though there were so many mouths to fill, she thanked God that no prattling tongue of them all had been hushed by death, no busy hands stilled for ever. And her boy! her dear Charley! this blow which, in falling so heavily,

had carried away her greatest treasure, and broken her household staff, had also taught her what a great source of comfort she yet possessed in her truthful, honest, dutiful, hard-working son.

What wonder that in the stillness of the night her voice was raised in thankfulness to God, who in judgment had yet remembered mercy!

Happy mother, who had so dutiful a child! Still happier child, who had thus early striven to realize the promise which is linked with the commandment, "Honor thy father, and thy mother."

Christmas Eve came, but Mrs. Shepherd's lodger was not gladdened by the sight of her son. There was good cheer prepared under the humble roof. Charley's master had made him a handsome present, by way of a Christmas-box, and this had been devoted to the purchase of unusual dainties, wherewith to keep Christmas. Mrs. Parks, too, had provided largely; and the plan of the two women was to join their stores, and, if only the sailor guest

arrived in time, to make one table serve for all.

It was getting late. All the children, Charley included, were in bed, and the two mothers were talking of following them, when a light tap came at the door. Mrs. Parks sprang up, but dropped back into her chair again, afraid lest she should only go to suffer disappointment. The visitor did not wait long, but raised the latch almost the moment after the rapping at the door ceased. With a cry of joy she started forward a second time, and with the words, "My dear boy is here," threw her arms around the neck of a blue-eyed, curly-haired sailor, whose sunburnt face was a very picture of good health and good humor. "In time to keep Christmas with you, mother, after all. Which of us is best pleased?"

"I think it would be hard to tell. Oh, Harry! how thankful I am that you are here safe and well." Then with all her gladness shining in her face, she turned to Mrs. Shepherd, and said, "Harry, this

good friend rejoices with me. It is her roof I live under."

The young sailor shook her hand heartily, and said, "It was a shame to come so late, Mistress, but I dare say you know what mothers are when they are expecting their sons home. I saw a light through the shutter, and I knew mine would sleep all the better for knowing that I was safely landed in old England."

With a tear in her eye, Mrs. Shepherd told him how very glad she was that his mother's anxiety was relieved, and she then began to get out food in order to set before him. "Sit you down and talk to your son," said she to Mrs. Parks; "I will make things ready."

The sailor declared he was not hungry. "I'm not a shipwrecked mariner you know," said he, "and I must tell you I've a friend outside."

"Why didn't you bring him in, Harry?" asked his mother, making a step towards the door. He drew her back with his

strong arm. "Wait a minute, and I'll tell you something about him first."

"About a year ago this acquaintance of mine was on his way home, when his ship was wrecked. He, and one beside, clung to a mast, and were tossed about for many hours, till at last my friend saw the other slip off, all benumbed with the cold. He sank under the great wave that swallowed him, and rose no more. This friend of mine had strength to cling still, and, just in time, was picked up and taken on board a vessel outward bound, and landed, after some months, about as far off home as he could well be, without a shilling in his pocket. Then he was taken ill, and put into an hospital. I can't tell you much about that; no more can he, for, poor fellow! he hadn't his senses most of the time, so how should he be able?

"When our ship arrived in that part of the world, he had just come out of the hospital, looking thin enough, and was trying for a berth to get back to England, where he has a wife and some children, I



The wife was no longer a widow.—Page 191.

believe. The long and the short of it is—for I don't mean to spin a great yarn, though I am a sailor—he came in the ship with me, and is waiting outside. Must I bring him in?"

Harry Parks asked this question, not of his mother, but of Mrs. Shepherd, who was standing with her head bent forward, and her hands clasped very tightly together, as though she was afraid to lose a word. "Tell me his name," she said eagerly.

The sailor smiled. "Nay, Mistress, he shall tell you that himself if you want to hear it;" and, opening the door quickly, he admitted—whom?

Ah! the wife was no longer a widow! The children sleeping in the upper chambers were not fatherless, for there! thinner, older-looking, and poorly-clad, but still in the flesh, stood the husband and father so long mourned as dead.

Mrs. Parks saw it all in the stranger's first glance at his wife, and, drawing her son away into her own little room, she

left the reunited pair to realize their great joy together.

And who can describe this joy; who understand it, except those that have known what it is to give up all hope, and, after this, find hope itself destroyed by reality?

It is not needful to tell what Mrs. Shepherd had to relate, because that would only repeat the whole story. Her husband's shipwreck and other dangers formed the subject of many a winter evening's talk, when the children listened in delight and awe to what their father had to say about his wonderful escape. The substance of the story we have had from Harry's lips. But if any one could have peeped into the little chambers above, they would have seen the father stepping on tiptoe, and bending to kiss each little sleeper, and then kneeling down, with his wife's hand clasped in his, to thank God, that, after all, there was not now one link missing from the family chain. And the awaking of the children in the morning! The delight of

each as the long-lost father clasped them in his arms, who can tell it?

"I have brought them no pretty things this time," said he. "Father has come home nearly empty-handed. But I have some wages to draw for the voyage back, and they will be useful."

And the little ones agreed that the best of all Christmas-boxes was "father" safe back again. It was a happy party that went to the holly-decked church that Christmas day in the morning, to celebrate with songs of joy the festival of the Saviour's birth, and to thank God for their own especial blessings.

And did Charley go to be apprentice to his master the barber? I have left the answer to this question till the last, but now I can give it. No. He went back to school again, to his unbounded delight. When his father knew all that the boy had done to help his mother, the tears ran down the strong man's face,

and he fairly exulted in having so good a lad to call him "father." Mr. Harrison still wished to take him; but his father said, "Thank you, Sir, for all your goodness to my lad; but he is too young yet. He has had more than a child's share of care resting on him this last year, and it has made him old too soon. He must go back to school after the Christmas holidays, or when you have got a boy in his place, 'to have time to grow younger again.'"

"Why, Charles," said Mr. Harrison on seeing the joyful face of the boy, "I thought you would like to stay with me."

"I'm very fond of you, Sir, I'm sure," was the reply, "but I always wished I could be at school until I was older."

"But how cheerful you were, and how you seemed to try to be of use in the business!"

"And wasn't it right that I should do my best, Sir, whether I liked it or not? I was always taught that, both at the Sunday-school and by mother."

This was what Charley understood by

doing his duty in the station of life to which God had called him.

Mr. Fuller, the schoolmaster, was glad to welcome his old pupil back, and many a rare shell and curious thing from foreign lands were brought in token of gratitude to the teacher in after days, by Charley's father. Mrs. Parks still dwells under the same roof with Mrs. Shepherd and her children, though in a larger house belonging to Mr Hopkins.

And I, in bidding good-bye for the present to my young readers, wish them many happy years, and pray that they may learn a good lesson from the tale I have told them of the way in which a dutiful son "helped his mother."



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